

THE LIMITS OF STATECRAFT IN JUAN DONOSO CORTÉS

Juan Bosco Rodríguez Ballvé

Directed by Manuel Braga da Cruz

M.A. in Governance, Leadership & Democracy Studies

Instituto de Estudos Políticos

Universidade Católica Portuguesa

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To Peter V. Rajsingh

Abstract

The issue running through the heart of Christian political thought is the correct interpretation of Christ's mandate to render unto God and Caesar what is justly theirs. Juan Donoso Cortés (1809-1853) was a singular continuer of this tradition. Donoso pondered the question philosophically, but also faced it at the highest level of European politics, in the revolutionary context of 1848. His legacy is a rationale for statecraft that incorporates a notion of the right limits to the political.

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I. The Crisis of Christian Statecraft

For Juan Donoso Cortés (1809-1853), Marquis of Valdegamas, politics at any given time reflected an answer to an inescapable theological question: the existence of God.¹ Donoso's disposition was that of a man of faith. His statecraft bore the imprint of Christianity. Characteristically, it was both animated and contained by the limits of religion.

Regarding limits, Donoso construed his political action as taking place between two parameters. A foundational or lower limit sanctioned government, whose telos was for the benefit of the social whole, part of an order that is created and is good. The transcendent or upper limit, in turn, circumscribed the temptations of a limitless politics of perfection. In between limits, government carried out its actions invested with divine authority. Donoso understood government as society in self-preserving action, carving out a peaceful order, so that the Church may fulfil its saving mission. Ultimately, both limits derived their normative force from the God who was revealed in scriptures and active in history. Grounded in this transcendent worldview, and drawing on this basic framework for government, Donoso practiced his brand of limited but energetic statecraft.

¹ Donoso Cortés was born into the rural bourgeoisie of barren Extremadura. In his veins, he carried the heat of his fatherland's *dehesas*. Through this imagery, Menéndez Pelayo, godfather of Hispanic conservatism, compared Donoso to the other great XIX century apologist: Jaume Balmes. Balmes' was a patient, methodical and rational Catalan genius. In contrast, Donoso's fiery rhetoric was masterly, arresting, and absolute. A precocious talent, Donoso settled in Madrid in 1832, and would soon partake in Madrid's highest journalistic, literary and political circles. Wilhelmsen advises readers of Donoso to "set aside all academic and scientific pigeonholing. To the theologian, Donoso seems like a political theorist; to the political philosopher; a theologian; to the man of action, a theorist; to the academic, a politician. Actually, he was all of these things." Wilhelmsen, "*Donoso Cortés y el significado del poder político*," 20; At 23, Donoso joined the ranks of the Ministry of Justice. All the while, he penned influential journalistic articles. As a man of letters, he would win a seat at the Spanish Royal Academy. Donoso served in parliament intermittently, but always from the ranks of the *Partido Moderado*. Likewise, he served the monarchy faithfully, throughout his life. He acted as private secretary and advisor to Maria Christina of the Two Sicilies during her regency, and then did the same for her daughter Queen Isabella II. Abroad, he served as the Crown's diplomatic envoy to Berlin and Paris, where he acquainted himself with the leading pens, pulpits and swords of his day. Finally, he met death while posted to Paris, at the early age of 43. This extraordinarily diverse range, prolificness, and depth constitutes Donoso's legacy in statecraft.

Europe's revolutionary wave of 1848 encroached upon the very idea of transcendent limits that made up Donoso's baroque political imagination. Following his basic politico-philosophical premise—that politics reflected theology—a radically different cosmology had brought with it a radically new politics. The historical forces of materialism, egalitarianism and centralization came to drive the age. High modernity was the time of the steam engine and the telegraph, and of a booming urban and industrial society. And also, of ideological party vanguards, leveraging the voluntarist masses, eager to command the thriving statist machinery. The God-void was filled with optimism and Promethean hubris.² The politics that sprang from this milieu was a politics of limitless utopia.³

As ever, the political question at hand had a theological preamble. Modern man had imagined a limitless politics because he had conceived himself liberated from the prescriptions of the doctrine of Original Sin, which is integral to the Catholic account of personhood. The basic political truth Donoso derived from the doctrine was that the ideal state, necessarily governed and populated by fallen men, was impossible.

It was clear to Donoso that, despite being well intentioned, modern ideologies unleashed the potential for a universal evil by positing the universal scope of statecraft with no tempering notion of fallenness. For liberals, contended Donoso, evil resulted from faults in institutional design. For socialists, it resulted from unjust social structures.

The challenge to Civilization lay with the latter. The seeds sown by liberalism were reaped by a comparatively resolute socialism. The socialists were willing to take liberal premises to their absolute conclusions by actualizing them in society, through technology and the state. In the revolution, Donoso could only see a parody of Christianity. Untainted by the Fall, and after the right statist policies had been applied

² Donoso was alert to the nihilism that had crept-in behind the late deism of the Enlightenment. European elites had long ceased to believe in God as an omnipresent force in history.

³ Modernity's rationalist and centralizing impulse propelled the industrial revolution and the modern state. Both advanced together, levelling resistances before them. State capacity was augmented by transformational technologies that spilled over from industry. In turn, industrial power and property was secured by the state. In 1814, a steam-powered printing press laid out 1,100 papers per hour in England. For the first time, a majority of the population was urban. In 1819, the steamship *Savannah* traversed the North Atlantic in 29 days. In 1830, England had 15,000 steam engines, France 3,000, and Prussia 1,000. In 1837, the telegraph was patented. In 1848, coinciding with the revolutionary wave, Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto* was fresh off the press. Marx was radical in—amongst other things—his embrace of the technological race, and his program to reconcile it to the proletariat.

through technique, man could launch his Pelagian assault on the heavens. On this occasion, it was man who ascended and was made a God, in order to immanentize paradise on the face of this very Earth.

“From Catholic heights,” Donoso contemplated how the “theological” resolve of socialist ideology, the physical momentum of industrial mass-society, and the technical prowess of the high-modernist state converged at a single point in society, within the state. Church and parishes; orders ecclesiastical and lay; local corporations, customs and assemblies, all of them vestiges of a genuinely diverse traditional society rich with intermediate bodies, could not resist such vast concentration of power.

For Donoso the new form of the political, namely, the high-modernist state, was an artificial construct.⁴ It was a device separate from the body of society, foreign to his lexicon and understanding of politics. The logic of the state was self-legitimizing and self-perpetuating, decoupled from any notion of divine authority. Thus, Donoso was keenly aware that he was living through a critical juncture in history when brute, autonomous power no longer conceded a transcendent limit beyond itself. This was, however, the new basis on which and from which statecraft would be conducted.

Donoso anticipated, in contrast to his liberal peers in parliament, that the state could never be value neutral. Sooner or later, it would be conquered by socialist ideologues, levering the masses under the banner of popular sovereignty, and the promise of an ever-expanding set of positive rights. The political machine would be politicized, ideologized and weaponized against its perceived enemies. A vast secular monopoly on power and colossal tyranny would be inaugurated to the detriment of true religion.

Donoso’s concept of political order was overwhelmed by the revolutionary age. His philosophy, premised upon the existence of religious limits, seemed exhausted. Concurrently, he found himself in an awkward position *within* the leviathan whose rise he was so astutely diagnosing. At the same time, the revolutionary context couldn’t possibly deliver him from his acquired political loyalties and responsibilities.

⁴ The concept of the high-modernist state is derived from Scott “*High* modernism is a particularly sweeping vision of how the benefits of technical and scientific progress might be applied—usually through the state—in every field of human activity,” Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 90.

Furthermore, government to him was an organic feature of any human society, regardless of the historically-determined form of the political. Hence, Donoso dedicated significant efforts to moral discernment.

The result was a cognitive dissonance. Donoso felt that by remaining involved in government he was tacitly perpetuating the totalizing dynamics that had been set in motion. In 1848, the state was besieged, and repression marshalled the methods of the new statecraft that Donoso deplored. This lesser-evil dynamic took an enormous toll on his Catholic conscience and ended up triggering a profound vocational crisis, largely underappreciated in the corpus of Donosian literature. The crisis is reflected in a manuscript rescued by the Jesuit Carlos Valverde from the Donoso family archives for his 1970 *Obras Completas*. It is worth quoting extensively, as it captures Donoso's—more or less successful, but undoubtedly sincere—attempt to reconcile his vocation, conviction, and action,

...I am in mortal uncertainty for not knowing God's will with respect to me and for ignoring what my true vocation is. From here spring...a thousand contrary resolutions...With one foot I am in the world, with another in solitude; with one in politics, with the other in religion, my soul becoming a sea of confusion...The question is whether I should continue taking part in parliamentary discussions, or if I should abandon them, and with them active politics, to occupy myself with writing for the advantage of others, or with prayer and good deeds for my own advantage. The pros and cons are in perfect equilibrium; on the one hand I say: I should not retire myself completely from active politics and parliamentary life, because in the end some good can be done, and a speech today can be a powerful lever; on the other hand I say...it is impossible to limit myself to pronouncing one or many discourses, to give them I must take part, unwillingly, in political intrigues and...fall under the power of the bad passions that fill that atmosphere; being there I have to aggrieve at times, and others be aggrieved...it is difficult to close the heart to vainglory, and sometimes to vengeance. On the one hand, speeches generate applause, but not good vows, and their effect, if any, passes quickly; it is better if I retire to speak to God alone. But later I tell myself: is it not sloth recommending this? Is it not possible to serve God in politics as it is outside of it? Who says that I am not moved by a restless desire for variety, perhaps followed closely by regret? And then...I say: Vanity and the desire to feature are the motives that impede me my retirement from parliamentary politics; the motives my rationality suggests to me to remain in it are not the public good and the benefit of religion; they are the desire to feature in the world,

to pose as orator and sage and occupy peoples with my person. As you can see [the manuscript ends there abruptly]⁵

Today we have access to similar letters sent after 1848, leaning both ways on the question of Christian participation in statecraft, a disquiet that continued until Donoso's death in 1853. In his correspondence with some of the finest European minds of the time, Donoso confided the possibility of stepping down from public into monastic life, to become a modern follower of St. Benedict of sorts.⁶ Yet in a contemporary dispatch to his former mentor François Guizot, Donoso exalted the salvific virtue of specifically Christian political action.⁷ He perceived a great need around him for an energetic and socially-minded Christian statecraft. As we will see, Donoso was deeply preoccupied by the Social Question, or the issue of the dignity and living conditions of those supporting the expansion of mass industrial society at its base.⁸

Ultimately, having weighed both the ascetic and (inescapably) statist paths, Donoso remained, not without melancholy, on the political frontlines. His definitive course of action is represented most faithfully by a letter sent to Count Raczynski, Prussia's Ambassador at Madrid. In it, Donoso explained that he was forbidden from abandoning his ambassadorship to Napoleon III's France by the complex negotiations he was conducting with Paris and Washington over Spanish Cuba.⁹ Thus, in the denouement of his political life, the push of the foundational limit of Christian statecraft,

⁵ Donoso Cortés, *Carta a personas desconocidas*, 477-478. Carlos Valverde dates the manuscript in 1850, and deduces from his study of the Donoso family archives that it was ultimately sent to several recipients.

⁶ Donoso Cortés, *Carta a Blanche-Raffin*, 344-345. In Christianity, St. Benedict is remembered as the proponent of monastic life after the fall of the Roman Empire.

⁷ Donoso Cortés, *Carta a Guizot*, 705.

⁸ The expression Social Question emerged in the XIX century to address the social dynamics after the Industrial and French Revolutions. The opening of Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum* reads "The elements of the conflict now raging are unmistakable, in the vast expansion of industrial pursuits and the marvelous discoveries of science; in the changed relations between masters and workmen; in the enormous fortunes of some few individuals, and the utter poverty of the masses; the increased self-reliance and closer mutual combination of the working classes; as also, finally, in the prevailing moral degeneracy. The momentous gravity of the state of things now obtaining fills every mind with painful apprehension; wise men are discussing it; practical men are proposing schemes; popular meetings, legislatures, and rulers of nations are all busied with it, actually there is no question which has taken deeper hold on the public mind." Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*.

⁹ Donoso Cortés, *Correspondencia con el conde Raczynski*, 945; For a summary of the negotiations see Graham, *Donoso Cortés: Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist*, 261-262.

that called to government service, prevailed over the pull of mystical escape from the new paradigm of statecraft, towards transcendence.

Donoso died in Paris just months after his letter to Raczyński, wondering just how he could render unto God and Caesar what was rightfully theirs, and not lose his own soul in the process.

A Vocational Crisis, Absent from the Literature

We have opened our study with this sketch of Donoso's existential crisis because we consider that it defined the culminating years of Donoso's life. Without it, his legacy in statecraft cannot be assessed in full. Donoso's crisis is, however, far from central in historiographic, scholarly and journalistic sources. The manuscript we have reproduced, for one, has not gathered much attention, even after it was made accessible to the broader public in 1970.¹⁰ Before moving on to our account of limits in the statecraft of Donoso, it is therefore appropriate to begin by expounding the reasons for this absence as part of a broader literature review.

The *Folk Theory* of Donoso's Conversion

The cause of the displacement of Donoso's crisis in the literature is what we will refer to as the *folk theory of conversion*, or simply the *folk theory*. The *folk theory* seeks to explain Donoso's winding political and intellectual life by anchoring it in a putatively resolute spiritual conversion around 1847. This account rationalizes Donoso's trajectory into two clear stages: before and after conversion. According to Macías López, it was the German Hispanist Edmund Schramm, for long the canonical biographer of Donoso, who first introduced the hypothesis of the "two Donosos."¹¹

The *folk theory* constitutes a narrative along these lines: Donoso was a liberally-trained, markedly Francophile, brilliant young lawyer and man of letters, who maneuvered to build a political career amongst Isabeline elites. With time, the

¹⁰ As far as we know, it was first published by Valverde as part of his 1970 *Obras Completas*. In truth, it is easy to miss the brief manuscript in the vastness of Donoso's complete writings, compressed into just two volumes in this edition.

¹¹ Castro, "Tradición, decisión y moderación: crítica a las tres vías de acceso al pensamiento de Juan Donoso Cortés."

contradictions between Donoso's Catholicism and liberal politics were resolved as he arrived, to a greater or lesser degree depending on the author, but necessarily through a process of political and spiritual conversion, at tenable reactionary positions, coherent with the essence of Spain's tradition. This alleged consonance neatly fits the presuppositions of the overwhelmingly Catholic set of authors behind the *folk theory*, whose readings are sympathetic to Donoso, and enthusiastic about his conversion. Hence, we are left with the *dos Donosos*: the early liberal and steadfast reactionary and Catholic martyr to the revolution.¹² Ironically, the caricature that is the "second Donoso" is occasionally employed by Donoso's progressive detractors as well as his obscurest proponents with perfectly opposite intentions.

The common source of the *folk theory* are two epistles penned by Donoso himself. In the first, addressed to Charles de Montalembert, Donoso pointed to divine mercy and "the study of revolutions" as the two drivers of his conversion.¹³ In the second, addressed to Alberic de Blanche-Raffin, Donoso described a movement from "sterile" faith to a more consequent Catholicism.¹⁴ Beyond these primary sources, folk theorists advance a triad of external causes for conversion: the impact of the pious Spanish musician Santiago Masarnau Donoso befriended in Paris, the death of his deeply religious and Carlist brother Pedro, and the sociopolitical ramifications of the revolution. Different accounts stress one or the other.

In his contextual essay, Castro lays out the "problem of conversion" as follows,

¹² Considering the "problem of conversion," Castro has noted that "intellect and faith make up two distinct but linked developments in [Donoso's] new Catholic position." Castro, "Tradición, decisión y moderación: crítica a las tres vías de acceso al pensamiento de Juan Donoso Cortés."

¹³ Donoso Cortés, *Cartas al conde de Montalembert*, 327-328.

¹⁴ "I was always a believer in the intimacy of my soul: but my faith was sterile, because it did not govern my thoughts, nor inspired my speeches, nor guided my actions. I believe, nevertheless, that if in the time of greatest forgetfulness of God, I was told 'you will abjure from Catholicism or suffer great torment' I would have resigned myself to torments, in order not to abjure Catholicism. Between this disposition and my conduct there was without a doubt a monstrous contradiction. But what are we almost always but a monstrous set of monstrous contradictions!" If quoted in full, it is clear from this passage that Donoso would have preferred death to apostasy. Donoso's "conversion" is perhaps more aptly described as a spiritual as well as rhetorical definition towards orthodoxy (J. J. Kennedy described the younger Donoso as a "casual Mediterranean Catholic"). In our view, the passage demonstrates rather the opposite of what folk-theorists purport it to show. It reveals a fundamental consistency in the basic metaphysical premises of the "two Donosos," namely, belief in the existence of God, and by implication a hierarchically-structured universe, the truth of Catholicism, and even a trace of fear of God, all of which is not negligible. Donoso Cortés, *Carta a Blanche-Raffin*, 342.

[...] if we assume the hypothesis that Donoso Cortes' turn is not comprehensible through theory nor reason, that it springs from an intimate conversion, the division between the young and the mature Donoso Cortés is the same that exists between two different authors, so much that they can be studied separately, or else the one that is thought genuine can be selected and the other discarded. In this way, there is a scission in Donosian thought, an incommunicable watershed.¹⁵

Folk-theorists are frequently exponents of the Spanish Catholic right (Castro gives the example of Santiago Galindo Herrero and Miguel Fagoaga). Together, armed with fragments of the two epistles collected here, folk-theorists have inclined the balance of Donosian scholarship towards a putative “second Donoso,” the most alluring from this particular position. In consequence, the fundamental continuities in throughout Donoso's political philosophy and statecraft are neglected.

The Limits of the *Folk Theory*

Within Donosian scholarship, the *folk theory* has irradiated with such force that crucial biographical facts, such as Donoso's crisis vis-à-vis statecraft, have subsequently paled next to it. Against the thrust of the *folk theory*, which imposes a second order thread of coherence to Donoso's life amidst first order descriptions of an inflection point, there are deep continuities in Donoso's actual political life, in both theory and praxis. Not least, the notion of limits, which is inseparable from Donoso's concept of statecraft.

In our approximation to the constants of Donoso's statecraft, we are indebted to the scholarship of Luis Díez del Corral and his disciple Rodrigo Fernández-Carvajal. Together, they provide Donosian scholars with an initial intuition of continuity in Donoso.¹⁶ In his essay *Las constantes de Donoso Cortés*, Fernández-Carvajal proposes an “illative” (as opposed to the standard “traumatic”) interpretation of Donoso's life. In it, he stresses the structural continuity of Donoso's absolutist mode of thinking. This Donosian characteristic had already been noted by more casual commentators. Louis

¹⁵ Castro, “Tradición, decisión y moderación: crítica a las tres vías de acceso al pensamiento de Juan Donoso Cortés”; Menéndez Pelayo referred to the late Donoso as “the only one that posterity remembers and reads.” Menéndez Pelayo, *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*, 1519.

¹⁶ Díez del Corral, *El liberalismo doctrinario*; Fernández-Carvajal, “Las constantes de Donoso Cortés.” Following Fernández-Carvajal, we have conceptualized the notion of limits in Donoso's statecraft as another *constante*.

Veillot referred to Donoso as a pilgrim of the absolute.¹⁷ Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, who for all other purposes assumed the *folk theory*, also found a constant in Donoso's anti-voluntarism. For Cánovas, Donoso's suspicion of the will "when he was a rationalist thinker, led him to subdue it totally to intelligence or reason, when fervent mystic to the holy books [...] he went from the cult to reason to that of God, way safer in truth; but always condemning equally the exercise of free will in the individual as in the nation."¹⁸ Nonetheless, Fernández-Carvajal's scholarly work systematizes the intuitions of past commentators convincingly and conclusively. In doing so, he shows the lifelong continuities of Donoso's political thought.

Our task is to demonstrate that there was yet another intelligible *constante* in Donoso's rationale for statecraft, namely, the pervasiveness of a foundational and a transcendent limit to political action. Said limits appear in Donoso's philosophical investigations, in his political praxis, and in subsequent reflections where the lower and upper limits act as markers against which to measure his own statecraft.

Our reading goes against the *folk theory* of *endogenous* change in Donoso's political thought. Instead, it implies that the revolutions of 1848 were an *exogenous* shock to Donoso's pre-existing rationale for a limited statecraft. In response to this epochal crisis, Donoso did not always come across as the confident convert and reactionary, as in the *folk theory*. Instead, he was initially doubtful and fragile, displaying the sensitivity of a Catholic conscience at work at a time of profound social transformation.

The Broader Disconnect in the Literature

The dominance of the *folk theory* and ensuing neglect of Donoso's crisis reflect a broader issue in the literature. We are referring to the methodological divorce of Donoso's political ideas from his political action.

If for an instant we were to hold the tectonic plates of the conversation in place, we would observe that discussions of Donoso have overwhelmingly dealt with his

¹⁷ Díez del Corral, *El liberalismo doctrinario*, 525. Veillot and Fernández-Carvajal point to the proclivity of Donoso's intellect to tend towards the absolute, eternal and unchanging, and not to political absolutism which, as we will see, Donoso condemned.

¹⁸ Díez del Corral, *El liberalismo doctrinario*, 498.

political *ideas*.¹⁹ Ever since his death, these have all too often resurfaced impersonally, apart from the socio-political and personal context in which they were formed and delivered. This disconnectedness animates our investigation at the broadest possible level.

Regrettably, addressing the *folk theory*, whether to accept or reject it, implies a level of familiarity with Donoso's biography that is largely nonexistent in the world of political ideas, as well as in its academic and journalistic orbit. In this sense, our study is but a particular instance of the broader project of delivering Donoso from cliché and overall obscurity. This project consists of attaining a holistic understanding of Donoso's thinking, by rejoining his political life and his political ideas.

If in fact someone in the room is familiar with the name Donoso Cortés, his most common association is to de Joseph de Maistre and the French traditionalist reactionaries. This connection is likely traceable to Isaiah Berlin. The most common way-in to Donoso today from liberal coordinates is Berlin's portrait of the reactionary Joseph de Maistre.²⁰ Thus, many superficial studies mention Donoso in passing as a token, second-rate reactionary under the wing of de Maistre.²¹

The scholar of conservatism Peter Viereck lamented this Donosian caricature that made of Donoso "merely a reactionary bigot." Viereck compared it to the "old view about Metternich." At the same time, he deplored Donoso's "misuse by fascists." Instead, the real Donoso in Viereck's eyes was "a contemporary of Burckhardt, Kierkegaard and Tocqueville. He is not a conservative thinker like de Maistre; he looks, like these great contemporaries of his, towards the future."²²

More recent scholarship in political theory anchors Donoso to Carl Schmitt. As

¹⁹ The introduction to Graham's *Donoso Cortés Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist* is perhaps the most comprehensive and contextual literature review, at least up to its publication in 1974 (This date precedes the latest renewal of interest in Donoso, instigated by Schmittian scholarship).

²⁰ Berlin, "Joseph de Maistre and the Origins of Fascism." While Berlin does not mention Donoso explicitly, he was perhaps the most prominent liberal critic of traditionalism. In fact, Donoso's name has been tied to the traditionalists within Spain. Both the progressive thinker and political figure Enrique Tierno-Galván and Menéndez Pelayo treated Donoso as an appendix to the traditionalists across the Pyrenees. To this respect, the best discussion of Donoso's relation to the traditionalists is Valverde's in his introduction to Donoso's *Obras Completas*.

²¹ Professor Spektorowski offers a wonderful refutation of Berlin, as well as an account of Carl Schmitt's appropriation of Donoso. Spektorowski, "Maistre, Donoso Cortés, and the Legacy of Catholic Authoritarianism."

²² Viereck, *Conservative Thinkers*, 153-158.

the continental Schmitt deconstructs the Anglo-American imagination, ever more doubtful of its historically liberal constitution, we can expect that more scholars will arrive at Donoso through the *via Schmittiana*.²³ In response, there have been recent efforts in order to disentangle the two from scholars in within the Anglosphere.²⁴

In sum, the Donoso's association to the French reactionaries by liberal theorists, together with Schmitt's notoriety, alongside his heterodox interpretation of Donoso as his own precursor, still weighs heavily upon Donoso's historiography.

If we turn back the clock to Donoso's own lifetime, his ideas were already making waves. Take, for example, Donoso's *Ensayo Sobre el Catolicismo, el Liberalismo y el Socialismo*, his best-known work. During his own lifetime, the *Ensayo* became the vector of theological disputes between the liberal Catholicism of Dupanloup and Montalembert, and the traditionalist camp of Veuillot. It became the locus of the proxy war between the Gallican and ultramontane factions of French Catholicism. The quarrel reached all the way up to Pope Pius IX, who mediated the dispute in favor of Donoso, who was himself exhausted by the controversies arising from his work as a lay theologian.²⁵ At any rate, the polemic was removed from what the *Ensayo* had meant Donoso himself. Disillusioned by practical politics, he had sought refuge in the *Ensayo* to ponder his theological concerns. The *Ensayo*, however, had become a throwing weapon in political skirmishes separate from his life.

A century later, a dispute took place at the intellectual core of geopolitically-isolated *Franquismo*. Hardline *falangistas* and technocratic reformers interpreted Donoso's political legacy to fit their respective political visions for Spain. Carl Schmitt, who had controversially reduced the Spaniard to a proto-decisionist, was present in the

²³ Pastor Martínez, "Juan Donoso Cortés y la teoría de la dictadura." Pastor points to the academic journal *Telos* as the Schmittian point of entry to Donoso.

²⁴ In addition to Spektorowski, see Fox, "Schmitt's Use and Abuse of Dictatorship in Donoso." In order to recalibrate the conversation away from the works of Donoso that Schmitt focused on, for example the *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, an English translation of Donoso's full oeuvre would be profitable. As a matter of fact, in the Hispanic world, Schmitt's deployment of Donoso is considered heterodox, to say the least. Perhaps the finest approximation to Schmitt's use of Donoso is Angel López-Amo's prologue to Schmitt's *Interpretación Europea de Donoso Cortés*.

²⁵ Donoso Cortés, *Contra el liberalismo*. 70-82. In the introduction to his anthology, Arnaud Imatz explains the episode.

flesh.²⁶

As Schmitt himself pointed out, Donoso's name comes in and out of history with every great crisis. It does so through scholarly, literary, journalistic and political commentary. It is true that Donoso's Christian grand narrative and prophetic undertones invite appropriation in times of crisis. His ideas, nonetheless, as those of any other thinker, must also be understood as part of the political context from which they emerged.

The common thread to the Donosian polemics referenced here—academic, theological or geopolitical—is precisely the discounting of Donoso's biography, including his vocational crisis.²⁷ Without it, we believe that his legacy in statecraft is only partially intelligible. Case in point, scholars readily forget that the fiery orator who captivated European cabinets with his absolute assertions and his penetrative mixture of theology and geopolitics, ended his days in Paris quietly, dutifully and skillfully, negotiating the terms of the last vestiges of the Spanish Empire, while privately doubting his motives for participating in statecraft.²⁸

Dualism in Donosian scholarship is symptomatic of a larger problem in Western academia, perhaps illuminated best by the Alasdair MacIntyre in his classic *After Virtue*,

There ought not to be two histories, one of political and moral action and one of political and moral theorizing, because there were not two pasts, one populated only by actions, the other only by theories. Every action is the bearer and expression of more or less theory-laden beliefs and concepts; every piece of theorizing and every expression of belief is a political and moral action.²⁹

In the case of Donoso, his prominence as both a thinker and a politico promotes this duality. Biographical neglect is not always the result of scholarly carelessness. Yes,

²⁶ For a study of Carl Schmitt's deep-rooted relationship to Spain see Saralegui, *Carl Schmitt pensador español*.

²⁷ Donoso's most complete biography remains Federico Suárez's 1997 *Vida y Obra de Juan Donoso Cortés*.

²⁸ Béla Menczer provides a list of some of Donoso's friends, allies and readers: "Louis Veuillot, a close personal friend during his Paris years, was one of them; Barbey d'Aurevilly did not hesitate to place him beside Joseph de Maistre and Bonald as one of the Lay Fathers of the Church; Schelling, head of the German philosophers since the death of Hegel, greeted in him a new and unexpected luminary of the century; old Metternich did not hesitate to declare that 'After Donoso Cortes, one has to put down one's pen, for nothing more and nothing better can be said on the historical transition we are witnessing.'" Menczer, *Catholic Political Thought*, 159.

²⁹ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 61.

we have encountered many instances of appropriation for particular political agendas. But Donoso's circuitous life as a thinker and actor, vastly productive in both fields, adds to the challenge of parsing him accurately. In addition, we must consider the notoriously labyrinthine political landscape of XIX century Spain. Alongside the ideological use and abuse Donoso has been subjected to, these two factors have opened a deep chasm between the ideas and the man; between theory and action.

There have been several efforts by Donosian scholars directed at bridging the gap between ideas and action. J. J. Kennedy, for one, lamented that Donoso's political biography had been set aside. He stressed that it was "necessary to report the one consistent feature of [Donoso's] career, namely his long record of service to the Crown and to the government."³⁰ But by dismissing Donoso's intellectual life wholesale, Kennedy robbed him of practical reason and agency, falling squarely on the other side of the dualism.³¹

John T. Graham, in his highly original *Donoso Cortés Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist*, set out to synthesize Donoso's intellectual and political life. In doing so, Graham set the right direction for the studies that have followed, including ours.

Finally, the Basque scholar Arnaud Imatz does allude to some of the private correspondence that reflects Donoso's crisis of statecraft. He does so in the introduction to his Donosian anthology.³² Yet, perhaps as a consequence of assuming the *folk theory*, Imatz does not treat the epistles extensively, nor consider them critical to understand the whole of Donoso's political life.

Itinerary

We have begun by laying out the climatic crisis of Donoso's life. To conclude **Part I**, we further examine Donoso's transcendental sense of existence, which serves as an upper limit to worldly affairs, including politics. We then consider the upper limit's relationship to the pressing demands of the Social Question, that occupied Donoso and the greatest European minds of the XIX century.

³⁰ Kennedy, "Donoso Cortés as Servant of the State," 522.

³¹ Kennedy, "Donoso Cortés as Servant of the State," 524.

³² Donoso Cortés, *Contra el liberalismo*.

Given statecraft's limited scope, **Part II** is dedicated to analyzing what the effective and normative limits of Donoso's statecraft are. In other words, what statecraft *is* and *ought* to accomplish, and what *is* and *ought* to remain beyond its reach. We will begin by examining the concept of authority in Donoso, the common thread of his intricate career in statecraft. Next, we will look at his theory of government as "resistance" that flows from the principle of authority. Bearing in mind these two core continuities, we consider the question of Donoso's use of ideologies and political affiliation. We interpret Donoso's political calculus as a form of political realism in the Augustinian tradition, and therefore bound by Christian ethics. Having established the foundational and transcendent limits of statecraft in Donoso, we arrive at what we consider his overriding political objective: preserving the temporal freedom of the Catholic Church.

Part III sets Donoso's statecraft of limits against the revolutionary epoch that erupted in 1848. We collect Donoso's reflections on the new ideological, technological and social paradigm, and spell out the fundamental incompatibility between the dawning age and Donoso's rationale for energetic but limited statecraft. We will discuss Donoso's resulting vocational crisis.

Finally, **part IV** ponders Donoso's metaphysical outlook in face of the epochal challenge. We consider his conception of human freedom and its interplay with Providence, his understanding of government as a divinely ordained service, his theodicy of revolutions, and his definitive attitude of eschatological hope.

God and Caesar, Face to Face

We write at a time when politics absorbs virtually all facets of life. Everything is political, we are told. Furthermore, politics and the state are identified and confused with each other. Aristotle's deep-rooted anthropology of man as the political animal is lost to an abstract and statistical man, that is the technocratic subject of the state. In turn, the state holds an uncontested monopoly over a growing and seemingly limitless number of social issues. Its task, it seems, is to provide a technical solution to all of them. Putatively, it has the mandate and the technical capacity to do so.

As we examine Donoso's thought, we must be cognizant of the distorting effects of the current framework of a totalizing politics, and remain open to Donoso's transcendent sense of existence, and the limitations it implies to the scope of politics. For Donoso "God is the ocean that contains and encompasses all things", including worldly politics.³³ Statecraft—despite its links to the divine—was an all-too-human activity. It always paled in comparison to Creation, revelation and the mysteries beyond. Accordingly, Donoso reserved for it a relatively modest place in the Universe.

In the *Ensayo Sobre el Catolicismo, el Liberalismo y el Socialismo*, Donoso revealed the relative places of temporal power and divinity in his cosmos. To him, temporal power was incomparable to the limitless designs of sacred history and its Master. Echoing the Gospels, Donoso wrote,

[Christ Said] Render unto God what is God's, and unto Caesar what is Caesar's; that amounted to saying: 'I give you your Caesar, and take away your Jupiter.' Asked by Pilate and by the great priest, he ratified his saying, affirming...that he was the Son of God; but that his kingdom was not of this world. Caiaphas then said: 'This man is guilty and must die.' And Pilate on the contrary: 'Let this man free, because he is innocent.' Caiaphas, the great priest, looked at the question from the religious point of view; Pilate, a man of laws, looked at the question from the political point of view. Pilate could not fathom what the State had to do with religion, Caesar with Jupiter, politics with theology; Caiaphas, on the contrary, thought that a new religion would upset the State, that a new God would dethrone the Caesar, and that the political question came enveloped in the

³³ Donoso Cortés, *Ensayo sobre el catolicismo, el liberalismo y el socialismo*, 499. The *Ensayo* contains a unified vision of "religious," "social" and "political" problems, and the corresponding religious, social and political truths. Donoso considers theology the most extensive level at which political problems must be interpreted, addressed and adjudicated. Particular applications follow from this fundamental treatment of the issues.

theological question. The mob thought instinctively like Caiaphas...and called Pilate an enemy of Tiberius.³⁴

Donoso took special interest in the figure of the High Priest Caiaphas. Like Caiaphas in the passage, Donoso recognized that the ancient route from the contingent to the eternal was not fundamentally political but religious. All political orders eventually decayed. Caiaphas guarded zealously from the potential challenger creed, precisely because he was sensitive to the true nature of the route to the eternal. Sensing the messianic potential before him in Christ, Caiaphas moved swiftly to placate it. Oppositely, Pilate, the archetype of the secular magistrate, could not fathom the primacy of the sacred over the political, at his own peril, and to his demise. The distinction between the spiritual and temporal spheres simply did not exist for Pilate. The worship of the gods was merely one of the things that the Roman ruler ordered to the common good. In a moment, he sought to absolve himself from moral responsibility by washing his hands. The meek became strong, and the delegate of Tiberius and the power of pagan Rome was swept away by providential forces.³⁵ Donoso never abandoned Caiaphas' insight. It remained the cornerstone of his deeply theological political imagination.

If we consider Donoso's work in whole, the scene at Pilate's court is more than a momentous event in the history of Redemption. It is also the key moment through which the rest of political history takes on meaning. No subsequent political process can match the limitless transformational potential of the Incarnation. The radical humility of its challenge to the *Imperium* modified the sources of *potestas* and *auctoritas* forever. In Donoso's words,

³⁴ Donoso Cortés, *Ensayo sobre el catolicismo, el liberalismo y el socialismo*, 507.

³⁵ For Donoso, Christianity was profoundly subversive of temporal power to the extent that it subordinated it to a higher law "From the sacrifice of the cross flow those portentous energies with which the weak amazed the strong, with which the outcast and unarmed climbed to the Capitol, with which some poor fishermen overcame the world," affirmed Donoso. Donoso Cortés, *Ensayo sobre el catolicismo, el liberalismo y el socialismo*, 688; Indeed, the Christ nailed to the Cross differed greatly from the Messiah that Caiaphas would have expected to restore the Davidic kingdom. In contrast to Donoso, Friedrich Nietzsche rescued the figure of Pilate in *The Anti-Christ*: "Must I add that, in the whole New Testament, there appears but a solitary figure worthy of honor? Pilate, the Roman viceroy. To regard a Jewish imbroglio seriously—that was quite beyond him. One more Jew or less—what did it matter? The noble scorn of a Roman, before whom the word 'truth' was shamelessly mishandled, enriched the New Testament with the only saying that has any value—and that is at once its criticism and its destruction: 'What is truth?'" Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, 45; Donoso instead focused on Caiaphas, insofar as Caiaphas understood the power of the forces being unleashed by Christ, above and beyond Pilate.

Christianity has not destroyed anything and has changed the face of all things. Opposite to revolutions, that begin by writing down the tables of rights, it has written for all the code of duties. It never speaks to the Caesar but to remind him the he is answerable to God and that he is consecrated to the service of the peoples; nor with the masses but to teach her she owes obedience to he Caesar; the doctrine of active obedience sanctifies authority; that of passive resistance sanctions human freedom that is not prescribable.³⁶

Christianity is the true and legitimate revolution. It has touched everything. It has made authority strong because it has given it a divine source—*nulla potestas nisi a Deo*—, and yet it has made it gentle by imposing upon it the limits of Christian justice. The indirect subordination of temporal power to the higher authority of God is, in this sense, revolutionary.

Donoso claimed that “the distinction between civil and religious power, between God and Caesar, between the pontiff and the king, was a most fecund truth, unknown to the peoples until the Catholic Church revealed it to the world.”³⁷ All the while, we ought to render unto Caesar what is his, steering clear of idolatry, so long as temporal authority remains within the bounds of legitimacy.

Latent Metaphysical Forces in History

The forces present in Donoso’s exposition of the Gospels do not exit history after the Resurrection. Indeed, they are manifest in two ways, the first of which is Providence. The God of Donoso was not a vague deity, but rather an intervening God. In fact, history for Donoso was the great tapestry that records the interplay of Divine Providence and free will.³⁸ Along these lines, Donoso saw the hand of Providence behind modernity’s revolutions. “The prudence of Europe in Utrecht,” wrote Donoso, “faltered for thinking about what matters little: in forming an artificial and ephemeral equilibrium by means of renunciations, segregations and aggregations of territories. It did not consider what matters a lot: an agent of providence that had to come, whose germs were fecundating on earth; in the rapid, instantaneous, providential expulsion of revolutions.”³⁹ The

³⁶ Donoso Cortés, *Curso de historia de la civilización de España*, 24-25. We have translated “answerable” from the Spanish *justiciable*, meaning the rendering of justice

³⁷ Donoso Cortés, *Pío IX*, 199.

³⁸ Donoso Cortés, *Estudios sobre la historia. Exposición a S. M. Isabel II*, 199.

³⁹ Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre los regios enlaces*, 151.

politics of equilibrium was destined to stumble. “It looks like God, in making man king of the dominion of the sciences, subtracted from his power and jurisdiction one alone: the science of equilibrium,” concluded Donoso in the *Ensayo*.⁴⁰

Donoso thought that the second way in which these forces were latent in history was through our fundamentally religious anthropologies. With the God of Gospels out of the picture, other deities would take His place, preying on our very nature. While ideologies prided themselves on being secular, they maintained a religious structure both metaphysically and internally. Revolutions came with their own gods, saints and sinners. In light of this, Donoso famously opened the *Ensayo* with the subtitle *How a great question of theology is always involved in every great political question*.⁴¹ Victorious amongst these ideologies was socialism. Its strength arose precisely from its theological structure, and its promise of a worldly eschatology.⁴²

Thus, during the revolutions of 1848, Providence in conjunction with the exercise of free will, together with our anthropological religiosity, were at play. Donoso foresaw a new and formidable challenge to the European equilibrium, in its configuration at the time, namely, the Concert of Europe.⁴³ The challenge lay with the compounded forces of revolution and socialist ideology that took the world stage in 1848. According to Donoso, the wondrous revolutionary force of Christianity had found its perverse inversion in the “satanic theology” of socialism,

⁴⁰ Donoso Cortés, *Ensayo sobre el catolicismo, el liberalismo y el socialismo*, 639.

⁴¹ Donoso then addresses Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who had reached a symmetrical conclusion from the antipodes of militant atheism “Proudhon has written in his *Confessions of a revolutionary* these notable words: ‘It is admirable how in all our political questions we always come across theology.’ There is nothing here that may elicit surprise, but the surprise of Proudhon. Theology, insofar as it is the science of God, is the ocean that contains and envelops all sciences, just as God is the ocean that contains and envelops all things.” Donoso Cortés, *Ensayo sobre el catolicismo, el liberalismo y el socialismo*, 499; Karl Löwith referred to the dispute as so “Thus an austere believer like Donoso Cortés could see in Proudhon an archenemy whose revolutionary thesis had to be refuted on theological grounds.” Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 65.

⁴² “Profound revolutions were always made by opulent aristocrats. The seed of revolution is not in slavery or misery; the seed of revolution is in the desires of the mob over-excited by the tribunes that exploit it and benefit. *And you shall be like the rich*: see there the formula of the socialist revolutions against the middle classes. *And you shall be like the nobles*: see there the formula of the revolutions of middle classes against the nobiliary classes. *And you shall be like kings*: see there the formula of the revolutions of the nobiliary classes against the kings. Finally, *and you shall be like gods*: see there the formula of the first rebellion of man against God. Since Adam, the first rebel, to Proudhon, the last *impío*, that is the formula of all revolutions.” Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, 311-312.

⁴³ The Concert of Europe was the system of European balance-of-power politics throughout the XIX century and leading up to WWI.

The socialist schools, ignoring the barbarous multitudes which follow them, and considered in their doctors and masters, are far superior to the Liberal school, because they go straight to all the great problems and questions, and because they always propose a peremptory and decisive solution. Socialism is not strong but as a satanic theology. and it is destructive, only because it is a satanic theology. The socialist schools, inasmuch as they are theological, will prevail over the liberal school, inasmuch as this one is anti-theological and skeptical, and inasmuch as [the socialist schools] are satanic, they will succumb before the Catholic school, which is at once theological and divine. [The socialists'] instincts must be in accord with our assertions, if we consider that they treasure up their hatred for Catholicism, while they have only contempt for Liberalism.⁴⁴

Donoso premised that liberalism, in all its irresoluteness, was condemned to be a historical anecdote: a mere prelude to socialism.⁴⁵ How could it resist the sheer physical force of the theological, technological, voluntarist, and statist wave? Again, for Donoso, the eschatological—both in its good and evil manifestations—towered over Pilate and the power brokers of all ages.

Soon, Proudhon's revolutionary heirs would command the state's new machinery. Christian freedom, namely, free will, would survive as an ontologically inextinguishable divine attribute. But bourgeois political freedoms and liberties would perish.⁴⁶ This recognition set the distinctive tone of Donoso's melancholic statecraft. Unlike Pilate, Donoso had an absolute concept of truth. Just as Caiaphas had sensed the potential in Christ during his trial, Donoso sensed in the theological structure of socialism its total challenge to Christianity. All the while, Donoso was self-aware that

⁴⁴ Donoso Cortés, *Ensayo sobre el catolicismo, el liberalismo y el socialismo*, 597.

⁴⁵ Elio Gallego García dates the death of liberalism in 1914. "In the XIX century a liberal was he who believed in an effective separation of powers, in limited suffrage, in the existence of recognized and guaranteed individual rights, in strong governments with small administrations, in respect for private property and freedom of commerce and contracts, in low taxes approved by parliaments made up of qualified representatives that were in general propertied and in the freedom of the press, religion and discussion, normally in the bosom of constitutional monarchies. Few equivocities existed in this concept, which is not true for the idea of democracy. Assuming this, we ought to ask ourselves, do liberal democracies exist? We dare to give a negative response. Liberalism as a doctrine and an attitude is anterior to mass society and, in fact, [mass society] is extraneous if not overtly hostile to [liberalism]." Gallego García, *Estado de Disolución*, 15; Similarly, it is questionable whether the "liberal international order" that emerged from the ashes of Second World War has heretofore rested on liberal dispositions, principles and ideas, firmly upheld by Western citizens, or rather on the ideological and economic hegemony of the United States, as well as its capacity to underwrite global security.

⁴⁶ Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, 315. We may distinguish between two types of freedom in Donoso. Man is endowed with *metaphysical freedom*, or free will, by his Creator. *Political freedom* is enjoyed by certain societies, but it is everywhere an emergent property of obedience to authority. "*La libertad no es otra cosa que la facultad de obedecer*," said Donoso, echoing the Roman statesman Cicero. Donoso Cortés, *Lecciones de Derecho Político*, 383.

he could not rekindle the flame of Christianity—the only possible dyke to the advance of socialism—from the magistrature. The transcendent limit had been undone for Christian civilization.

The Social Question

Donoso's rationale for a limited statecraft includes the notion that politics should not be the vector for earthly perfection, redemption or salvation as the immanentist conception of politics would have us believe. Donoso's prominence as a political figure, nonetheless, often belies the fact that in his final analysis, the solution to the Social Question lay with religion and not politics. The beginning and the end of the Social Question could not possibly lie within the province of government, in the same way that the ultimate ends of man were above and beyond politics.⁴⁷

For Donoso, government action could indeed attenuate the gravest effects of the Social Question. Yet it was equally a Donosian theme that at any given time, government could only reflect the health of the underlying society, that fed its executive ranks, lent its consent—even if only tacitly—and abided (or not) by its laws. Governments could not overhaul society, just as an effect could not precede its cause.

It is clear in Donoso however, that for social reforms to be effective, these had to be inspired by the principles of religion, regardless of where they were launched from in society. In Donoso's context, that pointed to the Roman Catholic Church, comprising its hierarchy and its lay members. In 1849, Donoso wrote to the French theologian Monsignor Jean-Joseph Gaume,

I never had faith or confidence in the political action of good Catholics. All their efforts directed to reforming society by means of assemblies and Governments will be perpetually useless. Societies are not what they are because of being constituted...by Governments and assemblies...on the contrary, assemblies and Governments are what they are because the society they rule is what it is. It would be, therefore, necessary to invert the process, beginning by reforming society, and later, making use of the already reformed society, reform its institutions.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Pondering Donoso's passage cited on Christ at Pilate's court, Valverde notes "how profoundly religious sentiment, the enthusiasm for the person of Jesus Christ, and the conviction that in his doctrine the decisive solutions to humanity's great problems were to be found had penetrated the heart of Donoso." Donoso Cortés, *Ensayo sobre el catolicismo, el liberalismo y el socialismo*, 507.

⁴⁸ Donoso Cortés, Juan. *Carta a monseñor Gaume*, 345.

On this occasion, Donoso's hopes for a response to the Social Question are deposited with the action of Catholics *qua* Catholics, and outside the political process. Social reform through politics is possible, but it is a slow development that starts with the moral reform of society at its base. At any rate, Donoso's tendency in this particular epistle is to prime the spirit of Catholicism's social teachings against their political institutionalization.

The same theme of the underlying social conditions as the horizon of government, and the primacy of Christianity over both society and government appears in the *Curso de la historia de la civilización de España*,

Only Christianity can recognize inequality among men without injustice, because it offers them equality in heaven; only it can advise resignation to the poor and humble, because every for every human resignation there is a divine reward; only it can keep the impetuosity of desire, because for every repressed desire it has immense retributions. Antiquity had the vain intent of reforming individuals by reforming societies; Christianity taking the better path, has reformed society reforming man beforehand.⁴⁹

With respect to Donoso's practical prescriptions to the Social Question then, the path to reform was, at the least, not the exclusive jurisdiction of government. Donoso looked to non-state solutions, drawing on the Christian virtue of *caritas*. While he recognized that relative poverty was a given in any society, he moralized about the sources of the particularly crude inequality of his time, derived from a "wealth accumulated by a gigantic egotism." Donoso warned that if the "governors of nations do not solve the problem, socialism will come to resolve it."⁵⁰ The sincerity of Donoso's social Catholicism convinced Marxist commentators. The playwright Juan Mayorga, from the perspective of class analysis, delivers Donoso from accusations of being an "organic class intellectual."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Donoso Cortés, Juan. *Curso de historia de la civilización de España*, 24-25.

⁵⁰ Donoso Cortés, *Carta a María Cristina*, 726. Donoso is writing to Maria Christina of the Two Sicilies, queen consort and later regent of Spain, to whom he was an advisor at home and abroad while in exile, before going on to serve her daughter the future Queen Isabella II.

⁵¹ "Associating Donoso's thought to the interests of the new propertied classes helps to understand his evolution as well as his vacillations. But to reduce Donoso to the role of organic intellectual of a class to which oligarchic liberalism, first, and the sacralization of power, later, were functional, would be to falsify him. To the last Donoso, Catholicism is a complete civilization. 'Secularization' means not only the defeat of obedience, but also of charity. It is true that Catholicism sanctifies authority, but it is also incompatible with despotism, as it made governors 'ministers of God and servants of the peoples'. 'When man became the son of God, he ceased to be the slave of man': this idea is central to the Donoso

All the while, Donoso insisted on the importance of framing the problem of material inequality in spiritual terms. “What is socialism if not an economic sect?” asked Donoso.⁵² At the end of the day, the real threat to social disintegration was not so much poverty but nihilism. Donoso asserted the primacy of the spiritual over both the political and economic.⁵³

Nonetheless, on a different occasion, writing to Maria Christina, Donoso demanded that “the spirit and principles of Catholicism be restored to our political and economic legislation.”⁵⁴ At this point, Donoso seemed to be more open to specifically Catholic political action from within the institutions. The extent to which the Christian virtue of charity might be legitimately and effectively compelled by legislation therefore remains unclear.

What is beyond doubt is that for Donoso, without the right spirit, legislation was impotent on its own. The Social Question did not hinge on rational institutional design, a specific ministry or faction in parliament, technology, or the providential rise of a great general or statesman. “It is not intrigues, but principles, which have the divine virtue of saving sick nations,” he would go on to state.⁵⁵ Principles are the true constitution of nations, and their spirit ought to command particular institutions. Religious truth is the foundation upon which policy must be built.

who affirms a Catholic ideal of justice. Herein the distance with which he speaks of the bourgeois classes that have forsaken the Christian virtue of charity, solution to the problem of wealth distribution.” Mayorga, *El Estado de excepción como milagro: de Donoso a Benjamin*, 289; Donoso was paternalistically inclined to the popular elements in society, and often favored them over his own class, the bourgeoisie. He considered the latter irremediably skeptical and impotent philosophically, and inept politically. But what to make of the masses that had fallen prey of demagoguery and the revolutionary schemes of the socialists? Surveying XIX century European social Catholicism, Menczer wrote “Not that either Veuillot or Barbey d’Aurevilly, any more than Bloy or Peguy after them, would ever have been hostile to the ‘masses,’ or insensitive to the suffering of the poor. There are plenty of signs to the contrary. Nobody in the XIX century exalted the ideal of simplicity, or the virtue of humble work, higher than did Louis Veuillot in *Les Libres-Penseurs*; nobody imposed on himself the duty of active service in the cause of the poor more rigorously than Veuillot’s master, Donoso Cortes.” Menczer, *Catholic Political Thought*, 50.

⁵² Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre Europa*, 454.

⁵³ For Carl Schmitt, every century, starting with the XVI, corresponded to a historical stage of the European spirit. Thus, the XVI was the century of *theology*; the XVII, of *metaphysics*; the XVIII of *ethical humanism*; and the XIX, the century of Donoso, of *economics*. The Social Question that defined Donoso’ time was materialist-economic, as was the dominant worldview. Thus, the spiritual-religious solutions he proposed could only be regarded as underwhelming when compared to the incipient materialist Gospel of socialism.

⁵⁴ Donoso Cortés, *Carta a María Cristina*, 726.

⁵⁵ Donoso Cortés, *Carta a María Cristina*, 729.

The Push of Ministry and the Pull of Asceticism

By now, the reader will have noticed a mounting tension between the centrality of religion in Donoso and his staunch commitment to government action. The potential contradiction led Kennedy to put forth the following “paradox,”

There is another [paradox] in the form of an unresolved conflict, between Donoso the man of thought and the man of action, over the effectiveness of government in society. The man of thought, especially after 1848, was pessimistic over—he even despaired of—the future of European society. Society was ill, perhaps mortally so. If a remedy existed it was not to be found in the economic and social palliatives that were the best that government could offer. Instead, the specific lay in the forces of religion which would have to be administered to each and every member of society. This, he was certain, would cure the disease, but Donoso was doubtful that his prescription would be accepted. And at any rate the cure lay far beyond the province of government. But the man of action refused to be consistent: he continued to be the energetic servant of government and to act as though the institutions government were still of basic importance.⁵⁶

Kennedy alleged there was an unsolvable incongruence between Donoso’s belief in the monopoly of religious solutions over the Social Question, and his career in public service. Setting ethical questions aside, Kennedy drew a line between Donoso the “man of thought” and “the man of action”—exactly what MacIntyre protests. Focusing on “the man of action,” Kennedy explained Donoso as a “servant of the state” whose fundamental political instinct was to procure “workable solutions” that propped-up the status quo, regardless of their content. What concerned Kennedy, and in his view should concern those seeking to grasp Donoso, was exclusively Donoso’s “long record of service to the Crown and to the government.”⁵⁷

If our account of Donoso’s limited but energetic statecraft is convincing, then Kennedy’s paradox will undo itself throughout our investigation. For now, we may begin by affirming, *pace* Kennedy, that we know for a fact how deeply Donoso himself cared about consistency between his convictions and his political action. Kennedy seemed to be unaware that Donoso himself meditated along the lines of his “paradox” up until his final days in Paris.

⁵⁶ Kennedy, “Donoso Cortés as Servant of the State”, 523.

⁵⁷ Kennedy, “Donoso Cortés as Servant of the State”, 523.

Nonetheless, Kennedy did pose a meaningful question. The primitive issue of whether to partake in or fully resign from politics that Kennedy hinted at is by no means trivial. The anarchist current within the Christian tradition, for example, views mainstream political action wholly untenable from a moral perspective. As any Christian with worldly political sensibilities but otherworldly ends, Donoso pondered the rightful place of politics in this world.

Kennedy's paradox therefore runs deeper than the superficial problems of ideological coherence or political affiliation posited by the *folk theory*, putatively resolved by Donoso's conversion. The potential contradiction is greater. Donoso's crisis hinged on the question of the legitimacy of his political vocation outright, from a Christian viewpoint, given the new paradigm of statecraft.

McIntyre, in turn, laid out the problem of Christian politics in modernity by drawing a parallel to the decline of the Roman empire. In the last page of *After Virtue*, he writes,

A crucial turning point in [Roman] history occurred when men and women of good will turned aside from the task of shoring up the *imperium*. What they set themselves to achieve instead—often not recognizing fully what they were doing—was the construction of new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained so that both morality and civility might survive the coming ages of barbarism and darkness.⁵⁸

How did Donoso position himself vis-à-vis the question of upholding or sidestepping existing political structures? Donoso carried out his life of high politics within the system. His overall trajectory implies an affirmative answer to the question of modern Christian politics. Donoso's lifelong "shoring up" of the Spanish Monarchy (even after recognizing its power had been de facto abolished by the age), and his definitive refusal to abandon his diplomatic mission to Paris embodied this disposition.

But Donoso's decision to remain involved in politics was not merely instinctual, as Kennedy suggests. It followed from a particular rationale for statecraft. Together then, Kennedy and MacIntyre prompt us to reconstruct this rationale, starting from its foundations.

⁵⁸ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 263.

II. The Foundational and Transcendent Limits of Statecraft

The Divinity of Authority

The most salient source of Donoso's rationale for statecraft is found in his theory of authority. Temporal authority must be upheld insofar as it participates analogically in divine authority.

In a series of 1847 newspaper articles on the incipient Papacy of Pius IX, Donoso put forth that "if in Catholic societies the peoples obey supreme authority, obeying it, they are only obeying God, that has willed that that authority represents him in the State, and that it be a holy and august thing. *Omnis potestas a Deo.*"⁵⁹ Donoso, embracing the Pauline teaching, believed that only the gap between God and man could sustain the notion of rule and obedience. Similarly, a ruler could only exercise authority over another man in representation of God.

Donoso's belief in the Divine (as opposed to mundane) origin of authority is the deepest continuity in Donoso's political thought. This element was present in Donoso even before he assumed a markedly Catholic rhetoric. In 1843, Donoso argued, "I do not believe in the divine right of kings, but I believe that in supreme majesty, considered in abstract, there is something divine, and I believe that the person who exercises it, be it a king, president, emperor or consul, is sacred."⁶⁰

Donoso had developed his theory of authority even earlier, in the *Lecciones de Derecho Político*, a series of lectures in political and legal philosophy delivered throughout 1836-1837. Valverde wrote of the *Lecciones* that,

to explain contingent reason [Donoso] appeals to necessary and absolute reason. Guided by his logic, he concludes by basing human authority—which he calls authority of fact—in divine authority—only authority of right (*autoridad de derecho*)—. Thus he forms a metaphysical construction that—transformed only accidentally, but substantially identical—will be that which will always uphold his political thought; there is an absolute divine order, of which human orders

⁵⁹ Donoso Cortés, *Pío IX*, 202-203.

⁶⁰ Donoso Cortés, *Sobre la mayoría de edad de doña Isabel II*, 10.

are participation of; that is why they are sacred and inviolable and that is why they ought to be respected by human freedoms.⁶¹

Donoso's enduring commitment to authority flowed from the belief in a personal God. His theory of authority retained the same analogical structure in the articles on Pius IX, published a decade later. But it took on a more specifically Catholic character,

...before revealing to man the unity of the human race, that is, democracy, God revealed his own unity, that is, monarchy; together these two revelations are the constitutive elements of the notions of obedience and command, of freedom and order, of force and limit, of movement and the rule. If the right to rule and the obligation to obey can not exist in the human race, because all men are equal and brethren, that right can be conceived in the Creator without falling into the absurd, and that obligation can be conceived in the creature without falling into the delirious, insofar as between the creature and the Creator there can be no equality nor fraternity possible...in Catholic societies man always obeys God and never obeys man. If in Catholic societies the son obeys the father, this consists only in that God has willed that the father represent him in the family, and that he has made paternity something venerable and holy. If in Catholic societies the people obey supreme authority obeying it, it only obeys God, that has willed that authority to represent him in the State and for it to be something holy and August. *Omni potestas a Deo.*⁶²

Eventually, Donoso's persistent use of analogy linked smoothly to a more refined Catholic metaphysics. By the time of the *Ensayo*, Donoso painted a picture of the Trinity and its analogical actualizations throughout Creation,

The same God, that is author and governor of political society, is author and governor of domestic society. In the hiddenmost, highest, most serene and most luminous of the heavens, resides a Tabernacle inaccessible even to the choirs of angels: in that inaccessible Tabernacle the prodigy of prodigies and mystery of mysteries is perpetually being worked. There is the Catholic God, one and triune...There unity, dilating itself, eternally engenders variety; and variety, condensing itself, is resolved unto unity eternally...[In God's essence] are, in a way indescribable and incomprehensible, the laws of creation and the exemplars of all things. Everything has been made in its image; that is why creation is one and various. The word *universo* means unity and variety together in one.⁶³

Donoso's fundamental law of unity and variety reflects an essentially creative and dynamic God. His triune essence contains, unfathomably, the providential ebbs and

⁶¹ Donoso Cortés, *Lecciones de Derecho Político*, 387.

⁶² Donoso Cortés, *Pío IX*, 202.

⁶³ Donoso Cortés, *Ensayo sobre el catolicismo, el liberalismo y el socialismo*, 507.

flows of history, whereby humankind tends to unity and fragmentation, successively.⁶⁴ As if it were the very pulse of history, the law constitutes the dialectical movement of Donoso's whole philosophy.⁶⁵ Unity and variety are "the law of nations, of the human race and History."⁶⁶

Amongst other things, the law determines how authority is configured into political power on Earth. Donoso believed that political order was organized analogically with respect to God, insofar as there was unity in the source of authority, and variety in its concrete manifestations. He understood institutions (which he calls hierarchies or *jerarquías* in Spanish) as conforming to a hierarchy of hierarchies. This cosmic hierarchy was diverse but also unique in its lifeblood, namely, Divine authority ultimately nested in God.

Thus, Donoso's Universe was Rome-centric but heterogeneous. It took concrete form in his ideal of a loose confederation of Christian princes, indirectly subordinated to Rome.

From the variety of municipalities national unity is formed, that at the same time is symbolized in a throne and personified in a king. Above all these magnificent associations is that of all the catholic nations with their Christian princes, fraternally grouped in the bosom of the Church. This very perfect and supreme association is unity in its head and variety in its members: it is variety in the faithful scattered in the world, and unity in the holy chair that gleams in Rome...This eminent chair is the center of humanity, represented, insofar as it is diverse, by the general councils, insofar as it is one, by who is on earth the common Father of the faithful and the Vicar of Jesus Christ.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ An appraisal of the law can be found in Valverde's introduction to the *Obras completas*, 104-107.

⁶⁵ The first reference to the dialectic we have encountered dates from 1834 "humanity is always identical to itself in the midst of the diversity of its revolutions." Donoso Cortés, *Consideraciones sobre la diplomacia*, 262.

⁶⁶ Donoso Cortés, *Estado de las relaciones diplomáticas entre Francia y España*, 523.

⁶⁷ Donoso Cortés, *Ensayo sobre el catolicismo, el liberalismo y el socialismo*, 523; Donoso's vision is consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church, at least up until the 1961 encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, under the pontificate of John XXIII. In a section under the title *Unity, not uniformity*, the Pontiff wrote "The Church of Jesus Christ...is the repository of His wisdom; she is certainly too wise to discourage or belittle those peculiarities and differences which mark out one nation from another. It is quite legitimate for nations to treat those differences as a sacred inheritance and guard them at all costs. The Church aims at unity, a unity determined and kept alive by that supernatural love which should be actuating everybody; she does not aim at a uniformity which would only be external in its effects and would cramp the natural tendencies of the nations concerned. Every nation has its own genius, its own qualities, springing from the hidden roots of its being. The wise development, the encouragement within limits, of that genius, those qualities, does no harm; and if a nation cares to take precautions, to lay

As Valverde pointed out, in Donoso the answer given to the metaphysical question about the origin of authority determined the social and political context.⁶⁸ Donoso's answer was that authority flowed top-down from God. It is no surprise, therefore, that Donoso censured the bottom-up, voluntarist social-contractarianism of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. For Rousseau and his followers, says Donoso, "free man is the center of creation; he is not born for society, society has been formed for him...if his will is his rule, there is no rule outside of him, if there is no rule outside of him, there is no God, if there isn't, man is God".⁶⁹

If the principle of authority is the foundation of any lasting social order, its absence implies social breakdown and anarchy. This, according to Donoso, was precisely Europe's political problem. In the 1850 *Discurso sobre Europa*, the second in the great trilogy of speeches, Donoso affirmed,

...economic reforms are no essential remedy for this evil; the fall of a government and its replacement by another government is no remedy. The fundamental error in this matter consists in believing that the evils of Europe are born of governments. I will not deny the influence of government over the governed. How could I deny it? Who has ever denied it? But evil is much more profound, evil is much more grave. Evil is not in governments, evil is in the governed; evil is in that the governed have come to be ungovernable...the true cause of the deep and profound evil that afflicts Europe is in the fact that the idea of divine authority and human authority has disappeared. That is the evil that afflicts Europe, the evil that afflicts society, the evil that afflicts the world; and that is why, gentlemen, the people are ungovernable.⁷⁰

Because Europe had denied the principle of divine authority, it had rejected the corollary of temporal authority, and had become ungovernable.

For Donoso, both the source and the limits of political power were traditionally informed by Divine authority and Christian ethics. The imprint of political modernity was that power, newly autonomous from authority, recognized no limits beyond its own internal logic. Hence the massive potential for the destruction of Creation in the vast accumulation of power, centralized in the high-modernist state, unchecked by a

down rules, for that end, it has the Church's approval. She is mother enough to befriend such projects with her prayers." John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, sec. 181.

⁶⁸ Valverde, introduction to the *Obras completas*, 123.

⁶⁹ Donoso Cortés, *Lecciones de Derecho Político*, 333. Characteristically, Donoso is occupied with the theological premises of political philosophies, in this case of Rousseau's idea of Man.

⁷⁰ Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre Europa*, 457.

transcendent notion of authority, soon to be at the disposal of the power-hungry ideologues behind the revolutions of 1848.

The problem of the limitation of power as Donoso experienced it will occupy us directly later on. At this point, as we conclude our discussion of Donosian authority, it is illustrative to draw on the ancient distinction between *auctoritas*, or socially recognized knowledge, and *potestas*, or socially recognized power. It is echoed by Negro Pavón as so, “*auctoritas* and *potestas*, authority and power, are two juridical concepts discovered by the Romans that are decisive in political thought. The legitimacy of power depends on *auctoritas*. But the revolution substituted legitimacy, of transcendent foundation, with legality, of immanent foundation.”⁷¹

Government as Resistance

Donoso conceptualized government as the executive arm of authority. Government was society in action, organized as a self-defensive force, substantiated by divine authority, with the unity of the organic social order as its end.

Donoso deduced this theory of government from very concrete anthropological premises in the *Lecciones de Derecho Político*. Governments, Donoso tells us, “are not scholastic entities, but historical realities; that is why they should not be considered in themselves, but in their relation to society.”⁷² With his characteristic anthropological focus, and his eyes set on the society at its base, he found the root of all social conflict in the constitutive dualism of human beings: the tension between intelligence and will.⁷³ For Donoso intellects were attractive of each other, harmonious and expansive. Where there were intelligent beings, there were spontaneous, orderly and reciprocal relationships, based on mutual interdependence. It was the will, rather, that was problematic. If intelligence was social and centripetal, the will was antisocial and centrifugal. A dependent will was a contradiction in terms.⁷⁴ Herein lay the fundamental social problem for Donoso: the contradiction of individual wills, as these contradictions spilled over from the personal to the social sphere.

⁷¹ Negro Pavón, *Historia de las Formas del Estado*, 104.

⁷² Donoso Cortés, *Lecciones de Derecho Político*, 329.

⁷³ Donoso Cortés, *Lecciones de Derecho Político*, 332.

⁷⁴ Díez del Corral, *El liberalismo doctrinario*, 500.

If human beings were solely intelligent, government would be redundant, given the associative tendency of the intellect. Yet our volitional nature necessitated government. In Donoso's view, the unconstrained will would destroy any society brought forth by intelligence, because the will by its nature was a "dissolving principle of all associations." Thus, Donoso aimed to preserve the integrity of society without mutilating human freedom.

Accordingly, society had the right to absorb that part of human individuality that was necessary for its existence, and human individuality had the right to retain all the part of freedom in excess of what society needed to exist. Thus, government was the organized action of society to resist invasions of the will.⁷⁵ "Government," argued Donoso, "does not govern but by action because...for government to act is to *be*, and it does not act but by resisting the invading principle; consequently, for the government to act is to resist. If government is action, and that action is resistance, Government is resistance as well."⁷⁶ Government in Donoso's mind reined in a variety of forces—individualist, minoritarian, majoritarian or outright anarchical, depending on the particular political circumstance. But it was "always and everywhere in history resisting."⁷⁷ Effective resistance conserved the social fabric, reconciling of freedom and order.

For Donoso Governments too could be invasive, and unjustly harm one of the three ontological categories prevalent in the *Lecciones*: intelligence, freedom (the will) and society.⁷⁸ Political order, in this case, degenerated into despotism. The preservation of these categories was the "rule that traces a limit [Power] can't trespass."⁷⁹ Broadly speaking, Donoso was an unoriginal proponent of ordered liberty.

The ordering principle of the *Lecciones*—that of the sovereignty of intelligence—was imported from the French doctrinaire liberal school.⁸⁰ Doctrinaire

⁷⁵ Donoso Cortés, *Lecciones de Derecho Político*, 329.

⁷⁶ Donoso Cortés, *Lecciones de Derecho Político*, 333.

⁷⁷ Donoso Cortés, *Lecciones de Derecho Político*, 333.

⁷⁸ Donoso Cortés, *Lecciones de Derecho Político*, 334.

⁷⁹ Donoso Cortés, *Lecciones de Derecho Político*, 334.

⁸⁰ Donoso was fashionably inclined to French ideas. He read the doctrinaire liberals across the Pyrenees: Constant, Cousin, Royer-Collard, and above all Guizot, earning Donoso the nickname *Guizotín*. Politically, their common denominator was the search for equilibrium—the *juste milieu*—between

liberalism, amongst other things, offered a response to the theoretical problem of sovereignty and its rightful possessor. Donoso followed the doctrinaires, espousing the *juste milieu* between two extremes that he described as equally “reactionary” and voluntarist, namely, the divine right of kings and popular sovereignty.⁸¹

Practically speaking, the sovereignty of intelligence is the sovereignty of the bourgeoisie or “legitimate aristocracy,” of which Donoso was surely a part.⁸² Royer-Collard’s maxim, whereby the *good* choose the *best*, is echoed by Donoso in *La Ley Electoral* (1835) “the *best* have the right to rule, and since the law doesn’t know them, she commissions so that the *good* are designated; the electors, in choosing, do no more than pronounce a name that the law seeks but does not know.”⁸³

Just as intelligence or reason can be located within man as a part of his dualism, intelligence can be located in the social organism. The bourgeoisie is its repository. The rising middle classes are the mediator between contingent and absolute reason, the latter traced up to the divine regions where ultimate authority resides. A capable government is necessarily an intelligent government. Only intelligence has the faculty of “foreseeing obstacles and calculating resistances.”⁸⁴

The Place of Ideology in the Statecraft of Donoso Cortés

Curiously, Donoso has been associated with mutually exclusive ideologies by historiography. He has been characterized as an intellectual appendix to both doctrinaire liberals and to traditionalists. More specifically, to the doctrinaires Constant, Cousin, Royer-Collard and especially Guizot, and to the traditionalists de Maistre, Bonald, and Lamennais. Both characterizations are consistent with the *folk theory*, according to which Donoso fully embraced both ideologies, evolving in his thinking from one position to the other. Instead, a reading of *constantes* must show that Donoso’s

withering absolute monarchy and the burgeoning demands of popular sovereignty. Donoso embraced their philosophical eclecticism and political moderation.

⁸¹ Donoso Cortés, *Lecciones de Derecho Político*, 370. The title of the fifth lecture is “The identity between two reactionary principles: popular sovereignty and the right of kings” for a title.

⁸² Donoso Cortés, *Lecciones de Derecho Político*, 311.

⁸³ Donoso Cortés, *Lecciones de Derecho Político*, 308.

⁸⁴ Donoso Cortés, *Lecciones de Derecho Político*, 383.

readjustments in theory and practice respond to a rationale for statecraft of a higher magnitude.

In our analysis based on *continuity*, Donoso never fully embraced either Francophone group, but rather selected elements from both schools circumstantially, insofar as they were effective for upholding the principle of divine authority. To this end, we have gathered evidence, not so much of the affinities that Donoso holds with doctrinaires and traditionalists, abundantly recorded in Donosian literature, but of the subtle differences he held with both schools, during the periods in which he orbited them.⁸⁵

The Doctrinaire Liberals

Donoso diverged slightly but crucially from the doctrinaire liberals in the pages of the *Lecciones*. Fernández-Carvajal maintained that there was a close affinity between intelligence and force that was absent in the doctrinaires. Donoso's Hispanic variation on the sovereignty of intelligence was not so much about institutional design as it was about strength capable of upholding authority. Fernández-Carvajal noted that intelligence in Donoso had a "demiurgic character with respect to the foundation of society and power." *Non est potestas nisi a intelligentia* was Fernández-Carvajal's play on words.⁸⁶ Similarly, Arranz Notario affirms that "The essential function of Donosian sovereignty of intelligence was repressive."⁸⁷

Of the Roman Republic, Donoso himself said, "The Romans [were victorious] over all peoples because they were the most intelligent of all peoples. Rome subjugated the world because she was the intelligence of the world. Her domination has the stamp of legitimacy, because I see the stamp of legitimate power in all intelligent power."⁸⁸ Thus, the Roman Republic struck Donoso as one of the successive incarnations of intelligence in history. In this respect, Gallego García has observed that Donoso

⁸⁵ Bartyzel, "Tres encarnaciones de Donoso Cortés: constitucionalista-decisionista- providencialista," is an example of a widely disseminated study, in which Donoso in his "constitutionalist incarnation" is homologous to the doctrinaire liberals.

⁸⁶ Fernández-Carvajal, "Las constantes de Donoso Cortés," 81.

⁸⁷ Arranz Notario, "El pensamiento de Juan Donoso Cortés": "la libertad no es otra cosa que la facultad de obedecer," 66.

⁸⁸ Donoso Cortés, *Lecciones de Derecho Político*, 407.

assumed human reason could only accord with Divine reason. Hence, Donoso did not consider the problem of contradictions between contingent and absolute reason.⁸⁹ Likewise, Arranz Notario notes a mounting tension between the limited intelligence of the doctrinaires “and the omniscient reason that [Donoso] identified with God” in the final lectures of the *Lecciones*.⁹⁰

The doctrinaire liberals were more reserved about the coincidence of intelligence and power at the head of society. Consequently, they were more concerned with the design of institutions for the rational organization and limitation of power. Guizot warned against “the incarnation of sovereignty in a group or in a man,” from which his support of the doctrine of separation of powers followed.⁹¹ Guizot also favored the cycling of elites via elections, and “publicity,” or “the call to the search of truth and justice to all men who possess rights in collaboration with those who exercise powers.”⁹² Division of powers, elite cycling and publicity were the three pillars of Guizot’s representative government.

Alternatively, government in Donoso was chiefly the executive arm of the social organism in defensive mode, and not a procedure to channel the social stock of intelligence at any given time. While the imperative of social conservation in Donoso is most famously captured in the dictum from the *Discurso sobre la dictadura* that “laws have been made for societies, and not societies for laws,” it is in fact present more than a decade earlier in the *Lecciones*.⁹³ As we have noted, the standard of a just government in the *Lecciones* was the conservation of “all existences,” including society itself.⁹⁴ Thus, the *Lecciones* contain a theoretical justification of the institution of dictatorship ordered to this principle. During “cataclysmic” times, in whom shall sovereignty reside, asked Donoso? “In the strong man, gentlemen; in the strong and intelligent man that Constitutions cannot anticipate...he does not belong to the domain of written laws, nor to the domain of philosophical theories; it is a protest against those laws and these

⁸⁹ Gallego García, *Estado de Disolución*, 18.

⁹⁰ Arranz Notario, “El pensamiento de Juan Donoso Cortés”, 70.

⁹¹ Fernández-Carvajal, “Las constantes de Donoso Cortés,” 80.

⁹² Fernández-Carvajal, “Las constantes de Donoso Cortés,” 81.

⁹³ To which Valverde comments in a footnote to his *Obras Completas* “this is the base and starting point of the whole of Donoso’s mature political thought: the value of civil society as absolute.” Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, 306.

⁹⁴ Donoso Cortés, *Lecciones de Derecho Político*, 334.

theories.”⁹⁵ In kind, Donoso will conclude the last of the *Lecciones* by proclaiming that “only truth is eternal; only the memory of the strongman that knows how to defend it amidst ruins is eternal.”⁹⁶

The Traditionalists

Folk-theorists believe that by and large Donoso adopts traditionalism as a political philosophy after his “conversion.” According to this narrative, the space left by the doctrinaire liberals after his break with them is filled by the traditionalists de Maistre, De Bonald and especially Lamennais. Donoso’s political thought is again represented as a footnote. This was the persuasion of Spanish pens such as Menéndez Pelayo and Enrique Tierno Galván, to name a few.⁹⁷ Instead, we find that Donoso’s association with traditionalism is best understood as downstream from the principle of authority that animates Donoso’s statecraft in whole.

In his introduction to the *Obras Completas*, Valverde recognized that “at first sight, the influences [of the traditionalists] are notable, to the extent that Donoso has simply been classified amongst the traditionalists, with no other influence but that of de Bonald or de Maistre, when there are others and much more important.”⁹⁸

Valverde interpreted Donoso’s traditionalism as instrumental: “pressed by the urgency of avoiding evils and by the activity of his political and diplomatic life, he never stopped to reflect profoundly on traditionalism, and accepted it as he found it in the French.”⁹⁹ The basic theory of traditionalism—that reason is incapable of reaching the truth on its own, and that all truth has its origin in revelation, later conveyed by tradition to humanity—was politically convenient for Donoso, and intellectually useful to combat liberal rationalism. By no means did Valverde, a Jesuit himself, justify Donoso. By taking the traditionalists at face value, Donoso incurred in “inadmissible” extremes in his denigration of human reason, thus departing from the orthodox Catholic understanding of man and his rational capacities.

⁹⁵ Donoso Cortés, *Lecciones de Derecho Político*, 390.

⁹⁶ Donoso Cortés, *Lecciones de Derecho Político*, 445.

⁹⁷ Valverde, introduction to *Obras completas de Juan Donoso Cortés*, 88-92. Valverde’s introduction considers the extent of Donoso’s philosophical traditionalism.

⁹⁸ Valverde, introduction to *Obras completas de Juan Donoso Cortés*, 88.

⁹⁹ Valverde, introduction to *Obras completas de Juan Donoso Cortés*, 89-90.

All things considered, Valverde attenuated the role of traditionalist theory of knowledge in Donoso. After sampling Donoso's views on human reason found elsewhere, he concluded that the core of Donoso's social and political thought would be left intact had Donoso adopted an Aristotelian conception of reason throughout.

Sevilla Andrés observed that, in spite of the obvious importance of theology for Donoso, he "is not a theologizing author, rather he uses dogmas without discussing them and dedicates his efforts to build, on top of the truths of Catholicism, a social and political theory in accordance with them...to extract the last socio-political consequence of our faith."¹⁰⁰

Donoso as a Situational Conservative

Donoso's imposing oratory, plenty with absolute affirmations and negations, is often quoted by Catholic traditionalists. Yet his rhetorical style coexisted with a lesser known but equally prolific moderate political praxis. Donosian historiography is overly idealistic in this sense. Donoso's strategy consisted of grasping his own situation amid actually existing political forces and building broad-based counterrevolutionary coalitions. His tactic was co-optation.

Donoso employed political ideologies to this end. He was aware, perhaps more than a pure political philosopher could ever be, that upholding the principle of authority required a tactical ideological attunement to the changing political circumstances. Fernández-Carvajal describes the political landscape Donoso faced as so,

The Spanish obsession of the moment is to reach a point of political equilibrium, and to this are opposed during Donoso's life, as in successive extremes, absolutism, progressivism and socialist and democratic revolutionism. 'He is an ardent liberal, first, because liberalism is the refuge against the excess of pure monarchy; immediately after he is a doctrinaire, because the sovereignty of reason protects him against the saturnals of demagoguery; he plunges, finally, into monarchical reaction because he judges authority to be vilified and abated,

¹⁰⁰ Sevilla Andrés provides the following example of this type of Donosian construction: "Where his fidelity to Dogma and his desire to extract ultimate consequences for political order is clearest is in his application of the law of unity and variety." Sevilla Andrés, "El pensamiento internacional de Donoso Cortés," 313.

and because he understands that only being strong and legitimate does [monarchy] save societies from sways and disorders.’¹⁰¹

Donoso acted at a time when opposite forces pulled away from the authority of government, in contrary directions. Preserving the principle of authority required adopting different—often contradictory—ideological positions, in order to balance out the destructive forces threatening Spanish society.

Donoso’s statecraft could be described by what Samuel Huntington termed “situational conservatism.”¹⁰² For Huntington, conservatism was contingent upon actually existing institutions and relations amongst groups. Huntington contrasted conservatism, an “institutional ideology,” from what he called “ideational ideologies.” Conservatism is “relevant in a particular type of historical situation...it does not ask ultimate questions and hence does not give final answers. But it does remind men of the institutional prerequisites of social order. And when these prerequisites are threatened, conservatism is not only appropriate, it is essential.” Thus, according to Huntington, conservatism is not an “autonomous” ideology, but a praxis developed to meet a historical need.

Arguably then, Donoso was a situational conservative. Huntington stated that “no political philosopher has ever described a conservative utopia...in any society, there may be institutions to be conserved, but there are never conservative institutions.”¹⁰³ Donoso always looked to the monarchy. The throne was the concrete institution that alone could authoritatively preserve social peace by integrating several factions in Spain. It was the axis for Donoso’s big tent counterrevolutionary coalition.

Thus, he faithfully served María Christina during her regency, and went on to serve her daughter Queen Isabella II, as private secretary and ambassador. In an 1844 parliamentary speech, Donoso defended that,

Spain, gentlemen, has always been a Monarchy; that Monarchy, in the prolongation of time, has been a religious Monarchy; that Monarchy, in the prolongation of the centuries, has been a democratic Monarchy. Monarchy! See here political truth for us. Catholicism! See here, for all, but for us especially,

¹⁰¹ Fernández-Carvajal, “Las constantes de Donoso Cortés,” 77. Here, Fernández-Carvajal is quoting the work of Donoso’s collaborator, J. Francisco Pacheco.

¹⁰² Huntington, “Conservatism as an ideology,” 473.

¹⁰³ Huntington, “Conservatism as an ideology,” 458.

religious truth. Democracy! Here lies social truth for us. Catholicism, Monarchy, democracy, see here the Spanish truth in full.¹⁰⁴

Donoso fought to shore up monarchy as an institution. All the while, answers to ultimate questions remained in the purview and custody of the Church and her dogmas. Preserving social order through the monarchy ensured that the Church would maintain its freedom and this, as we will argue, was the end to which all of Donoso's statecraft was oriented to.

If we turn to Donoso's political biography, we will see that the spirit of "situational conservatism" surfaced at some other turning points. Thus, Donoso accepted the Spanish constitution of 1837, drafted by the progressives in power, insofar as it followed "moderate principles" (although he rejected the principle of national sovereignty, that was included in the preamble, and not in the body of the text). Considering this text, with a clear sense of the politically viable, Donoso added that "perfection in politics is almost impossible to obtain, and if the 1837 Constitution is not perfect, if it could be so some more, according to our ideas, not because of this we will not adopt it with sincerity."¹⁰⁵

By 1838, in the *Polémica con el doctor Rossi*, Donoso gathered that the eclecticism of the doctrinaire liberals no longer sufficed to uphold the principle of authority. If doctrinaire concepts had been suitable in the aftermath of the 1830 revolution and instrumental to the institution of the July Monarchy, France now needed "philosophical, political and social dogma to preside over the consummation of its glorious destinies and illuminate its race."¹⁰⁶ "Society no longer needs analytic eclecticism useful to discover error, but synthetic dogmatism to discover new truths," added Donoso.¹⁰⁷ France "seeks what eclectic philosophy cannot provide: a dogma."¹⁰⁸ In this respect, the doctrinaires had become "doctors of an impotent science."¹⁰⁹ The

¹⁰⁴ Donoso Cortés, *Discurso pronunciado en el congreso a propósito de una enmienda al proyecto de constitución*, 88; Donoso, clarified, de rigueur, that when he spoke of a democratic Monarchy, was not referring to the "Monarchy of the mob" but to that Monarchy in which "the common interests prevail over the privileged interests, the general interests over the aristocratic interests." Donoso Cortés, *Discurso pronunciado en el congreso a propósito de una enmienda al proyecto de constitución*, 88.

¹⁰⁵ Garrido Muro, "'Cómo organizar el caos': Donoso Cortés en la política española," 41.

¹⁰⁶ Donoso Cortés, *Polémica con el Dr. Rossi*, 497.

¹⁰⁷ Donoso Cortés, *Polémica con el Dr. Rossi*, 498.

¹⁰⁸ Donoso Cortés, *Polémica con el Dr. Rossi*, 499.

¹⁰⁹ Donoso Cortés, *Polémica con el Dr. Rossi*, 498.

bourgeois doctrinaires, from their new position in government, had begun to vacillate.¹¹⁰

And yet the same doctrinaire principles that Donoso had considered exhausted for France were circumstantially useful to Spain. Indeed, he recovered them for the 1845 constitutional reform. According to Suárez's biography, Donoso acted as the Secretary of the Commission responsible for drafting the dictum.¹¹¹ In a 1844 speech presenting the constitutional reform to parliament, the *Discurso sobre el proyecto de Constitución*, Donoso posited that "In Spain, to govern, it is necessary to unite in a single center all the constitutive elements of the Spanish nation. And what are these elements? Religion, Monarchy and Democracy; a party that is not at once monarchic, religious and democratic, cannot govern well."¹¹²

The doctrinaire *juste milieu* proved supremely useful and practicable given Spain's specific balance of power. As Kennedy points out,

"[Donoso] begged the various parties and factions of Spain to unite. The Carlists, he said, had been concerned only with religion; they had neglected the rest. The *moderados* (his own party), had supported liberty and the monarchy, but they had not been attentive to democracy; the liberals had supported the monarchy and democracy, but they had made the latter turbulent and revolutionary, they had made liberty suffer. He hoped that the reformed constitution might be the means of joining all these forces in the interest of the welfare of Spain."¹¹³

By co-optation, Donoso constructed a coalition to neutralize the latent Carlist challenge and the specter of civil war, while keeping the *Partido Progresista* at a distance.¹¹⁴ The constitutional reform effectively consolidated the liberal regime of

¹¹⁰ In a later diplomatic dispatch, sent from Paris in 1851, Donoso would recall the bourgeois doctrinaires' incapacity to govern vis-à-vis the ferment of the 1848 revolution. "Those classes, dominant today in Europe, are dispossessed of the two qualities that make Government possible: obedience and command. Not knowing how to command those who obey nor obeying those who command, they do nothing but agitate society and oblige it to seek refuge or a remedy in dictatorship or in revolutions. All the peoples dominated by those classes will perpetually oscillate between dictatorship, the remedy to anarchy, and anarchy, the remedy to dictatorship." Donoso Cortés, *Despachos desde París (1851-1853)*, 832.

¹¹¹ Suárez, *Vida y Obra de Juan Donoso Cortés*, 545-552.

¹¹² Donoso Cortés, *Discurso pronunciado en el congreso a propósito de una enmienda al proyecto de constitución*, 91.

¹¹³ Kennedy, "Donoso Cortés as Servant of the State," 540.

¹¹⁴ The context of the constitutional reform is the aftermath of the First Carlist War (1833-1840). Sometimes referred to as the First Civil War in Spanish historiography, the war was ignited by the problem of the succession of Ferdinand VII. On one side were the supporters of Carlos María Isidro de Borbón or Don Carlos (Ferdinand's brother): the *Carlistas*. On the other, those of his daughter, who

Queen Isabella II. The new text inaugurated the *Decada Moderada*, during which Donoso's *Partido Moderado* gained hegemony for a decade.¹¹⁵ According to Díez del Corral, Donoso's "ideological rigor and acute realist sense" would be embodied by Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, doctrinaire and chief architect of the Bourbon *Restauración*, who picked up Donoso's constitutional framework in 1876.¹¹⁶

The 1845 reform weaved the triumvirate of religion, monarchy and democracy together, defending and building on socially-rooted realities and institutions, rather than "ideating" radically new institutions, in the abstract. Statecraft, as ever, consisted in keeping the Spanish social organism together, even at the expense of ideological purity. This was the purpose and the standard to which Donoso's subjected doctrinaire principles as he recovered them. In this way, appeasement and concession in the short run could be reconciled to the overarching interests of authority in the long run.

While the spirit of Donoso's pragmatism would survive him, he would abandon it as a viable political route for Spain following the upheavals of 1848 across the continent. By the time of the 1849 *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, the pressures of faction could no longer be conducted. The center did not hold. Only then, Donoso reluctantly supported Narváez's commissary dictatorship. A year later, he would vote him down. The moderate regime Donoso had helped build was overthrown by the 1854 revolution or *Vicalvarada*, inaugurating the *bienio progresista*.

would become Queen Isabella II. A peace treaty was signed in 1840, but the traditional forces backing Don Carlos remained latent. At the time of the outbreak of the war, Donoso had recently arrived in Madrid. He worked in favor of the liberal Isabeline cause. Soon, the liberals would split into progressive and moderate camps, Donoso joining the latter.

¹¹⁵ Upon the arrival of the *moderados* to power in 1844, the Holy See, that had unilaterally broken off diplomatic relations with Spain after the clergy was obliged to swear-in the constitution of 1837, recognized Isabella II as the legitimate queen of Spain.

¹¹⁶ Díez del Corral, *El liberalismo doctrinario*, 521; Díez del Corral concludes his chapter on Donoso with the following judgement "Donoso is not merely an idealist, elusive of concrete political realities. Beneath the rhetorical apparel and pure questions of principle there is a very real practical posture. The contest between socialist and Catholic phalanxes is not projected upon a vague posterity, it is specified in the immediate political moment, and decision is a weapon in the hand of flesh and bone personages. The theological apparatus does not only move in lofty regions, it works in favor of very singular politicians: one good day, Louis Napoleon turns out to be the instrument of Providence: 'Let God's justice through,' wrote Donoso from Paris, referring to him." Díez del Corral, *El liberalismo doctrinario*, 528.

The Carlist Question

Donoso's reservations towards legitimist Carlism, his affiliation with the *Partido Moderado*, and his service to a monarchy of liberal tendency often arise in scholarly as well as informal conversations. Wasn't Carlism the only political home for a religious traditionalist? Juan Beneyto Pérez framed the problem in the following terms, "the two greatest personalities of counterrevolutionary ideological lineage, are two traditionalists that did not affiliate, however, to the corresponding political organization: Balmes and Donoso."¹¹⁷

During his mature political life, Donoso confronted the Second Carlist War (1846-1849), or *Guerra de los 'matiners.'* Compared to the destructive First Carlist War, the conflict was a low-intensity insurrection, regionally concentrated in Catalonia. By then, Donoso was deep into his project of national integration from the ranks of the *Partido Moderado*.¹¹⁸ In this iteration of dynastic conflict, the balance of power was so uneven, that anything but shoring up the Isabeline Monarchy would have been equivalent to undermining the principle of authority.

Once again, Donoso's situational conservatism was at play. But before addressing the political moment further, we must insist that this mode of operating in Donoso was not a pure form of realpolitik. Rather, it was derived from his theory of authority and government, which at the same time was laden with the normativity of the transcendent limit of statecraft. Recapitulating: government was divinely authorized, yet acted upon concrete anthropological realities, with the integrity of society as its object. Quite

¹¹⁷ Beneyto Pérez, *Historia de las doctrinas políticas*, 450.

¹¹⁸ In a meeting with Guizot in 1845, Donoso considered the possibility of a marriage between Isabella II and Carlos Luis de Borbón, Count of Montemolín, son of Don Carlos. Such an arrangement would have mitigated the underlying tensions between *Isabelinos* and *Carlistas*. Ultimately, no agreement was reached, not least because of Carlos Luis' refusal to be king consort, which is the compromise Jaime Balmes had suggested. Shortly after the marriage of Isabella to Francisco de Asís de Borbón, the insurrection set off. We are left, however, with an interesting entry in Donoso's diary, from the sidelines of his meeting with Guizot. While agreeing with Guizot that at the time the marriage was not viable, "I will not say the same further on; if revolution threatens us, a good many of the *moderados* will see in this marriage the only hope. If the threats of revolution coincide with the moderation of the Carlists in such a way that they do not aspire to more than the Count of Montemolín being the husband of Spain, then the whole thing would seem probable." Donoso seems to have considered Carlist insurrectionism as a resource-consuming splinter from the necessarily broad-based counterrevolutionary coalition, and a disturbance from the real challenge at hand which was the containment of the revolution, that required every effort. Suárez, *Vida y Obra de Juan Donoso Cortés*, 582.

literally, “territorial unity is the first and most essential of all unities; political unity, moral unity, religious unity, without territorial unity, all are scant.”¹¹⁹

For Donoso, this was the concrete political problem pervasive in Spain. The Iberian Peninsula, despite its relatively small size, is an ethno-linguistically intricate and geographically problematic territory. The breakdown of the principle of authority complicated Spain’s persistent problem of political unity. The problem was compounded by Spain’s national character. Per Donoso, “the historical character of Spaniards is to exaggerate everything: we exaggerate virtues and vices, things great and small...we have only socialism left to exaggerate, and we shall exaggerate it surely. Then you will see what Spaniards are enamored of an idea good or bad.”¹²⁰

It is in this sense that Carlists became a threat to authority and the integrity of political society. Bartyzel, who sympathizes with the Carlist cause, captures Donoso’s inclinations throughout the dynastic dispute,

Donoso Cortés declared himself in favor of the usurpers: he was a trusted counselor to the regent (whom he assisted during her exile in Paris in 1840-43) and preceptor of her daughter, Queen Isabella. He considered the Carlists, the ultra-Catholic traditionalists and legitimists, ‘right-wing anarchists,’ as dangerous to political and social order as the left-wing revolutionaries.¹²¹

Surely, Donoso’s personal history with María Christina and Isabella II played into his unwavering support of the Isabeline camp. But setting personal loyalties aside, anything but supporting the continuity of the monarchy would have also been a betrayal of the unity of the social organism. Grounded in this premise, Donoso surveyed Spain’s political landscape, from the center of political power of the Isabeline regime, to the periphery. From that vantage point, the centrifugal forces embodied in *Carlismo* were, above all, a challenge to authority.

Carlist defiance activated Donoso’s fundamentally authoritarian instincts. On one occasion, Donoso had defined himself as “a man of Government, a man of Government before all and above all; and man of Government, I vote always with the

¹¹⁹ Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre las relaciones con otras potencias*, 171. This is the most geopolitical of Donoso’s speeches. In it, he exposes the realist crust of his political thought.

¹²⁰ Donoso Cortés, *Correspondencia con el conde Raczynski*, 935.

¹²¹ Bartyzel, “Tres encarnaciones de Donoso Cortés: constitucionalista-decisionista-providencialista.” 140-141.

Government in case of doubt.”¹²² Even before that, in the prologue to the 1834 *Consideraciones sobre la diplomacia*, upon the slaying of friars by a mob in Madrid, and with the First Carlist War raging in the background—with the Carlists led by the “disloyal prince”—Donoso called for the government to “defend the throne, consolidate freedom, suffocate anarchy.” Donoso implied that anarchy could come from all sides, and creep into the center. He also revealed the lifelong political priorities that would dominate his statecraft.¹²³

The Limits of Realism

We consider Donoso’s situational conservatism a form of political realism, insofar as it is premised on the practical defense of concrete institutions, rather than in abstract ideation. At times, it appears that Donoso’s political philosophy is wholly functional and oriented towards his political objectives. If this were a true assessment, his philosophy would command no autonomous value.

Unquestionably, there were functionalist elements in Donoso’s statecraft. His early formulation of the sovereignty of intelligence, for example, contains within it a consequentialist logic. A theory of sovereignty that elevates intelligence, insofar as intelligence is selectively distributed in the body politic, yielded a desirably hierarchical society. In contrast, a theory erected on the will, possessed indiscriminately by all, would render an egalitarianism unacceptable to an elitist such as Donoso. Further down the line, trinitarian dogma provided Donoso with a stronger foundation for authority. Dogma was located in a theological dimension, beyond the “universal dissolvent” of what Donoso calls the “discussing class” (the liberal bourgeoisie), and the demands of the revolution.¹²⁴ Again, Donoso was adopting a theory, at least partly because it was functional to the principle of authority and the integrity of society.

Casual commentators have also noticed the realist streaks in Donoso’s praxis. Often, his realism is juxtaposed with the vivid imagery of his oratory and prose. Eugenio d’Ors best encapsulated Donoso’s dynamism and mercurial genius in his memorable

¹²² Garrido Muro, “‘Cómo organizar el caos’: Donoso Cortés en la política española,” 56-57.

¹²³ Donoso Cortés, *Consideraciones sobre la diplomacia*, 227-228.

¹²⁴ Valverde, introduction to *Obras completas de Juan Donoso Cortés*, 124.

formulation *cálido retórico, frío político*.¹²⁵ Donoso was the fiery rhetorician who, in the words of Menéndez Pelayo, “speaks and writes as if through lightning; he lays siege...to the towers of the ideal, and every speech seems like a victorious incursion into the province of *ideas madre*.” On top of this, he was also the political expert, the *éminence grise* behind palace intrigues, and the penetrating geopolitical analyst.¹²⁶

Beyond Functionalism

Notwithstanding its functionalist and consequentialist elements, accounting for Donoso’s realism is necessary but not sufficient for an integral account of Donoso’s statecraft. His situational conservatism is, in the final analysis, derived from normative premises. Ultimately, Donoso willingly accepted an external limit to his *realpolitik*.

Donoso’s own definition of statesmanship contained the dramatic tension between political activity and the upper limit of Christian ethics,

If I were asked what is the special character that distinguishes the statesman, I would say that it is the instinct that discerns the questions in which there may be transaction, the questions in which it is possible to concede, and the questions that cannot be compromise and cannot be abandoned.¹²⁷

Donoso, however, never spelled out the precise content of this limit. Can we meaningfully situate this limit? To the extent that it is felt throughout his political biography, it is worth pursuing this angle. Our task then is to approximate it as best we can.

We may begin by observing that only the existence of such an ethical limit, sincerely internalized, could have elicited the sort of discernment that characterized the

¹²⁵ Or “warm rhetorician, cold politician.” Villar Borda, *Donoso Cortés y Carl Schmitt*, 172.

¹²⁶ Menéndez Pelayo, *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*, 1517; As a student of Russia, Donoso’s observations predate those of George F. Kennan, the American diplomat who devised the Cold War policy of *containment*. Arguably, Donoso penetrated deeper historico-theological regions than Kennan. “A man who in 1848 foresaw that the future socialist revolution would not explode in London but in Saint Petersburg, and that already in 1848 saw in the union of socialism and slavism the decisive event of the coming generation, is a political thinker with the rare faculty of glimpsing, through combined constructions, the ideological motives of men in their final political consequences, who deserves to be studied even when, with a style that today seems dated, he enters into the field of theology,” said Schmitt of Donoso’s geopolitical insight. Schmitt, *Interpretación Europea de Donoso Cortés*, 141.

¹²⁷ Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre las relaciones con otras potencias*, 171.

late Donoso.¹²⁸ Although the loose collection of characterizations we have collated above, including d’Ors’ famous meme, neglect Donoso’s crisis, we know otherwise. Donoso’s moral imagination is important as a characteristic of Donoso’s political thought.

Despite Donoso’s commitment to the Christian ideal, it must have been obvious to him, as it is for us today, that the spheres of political action and ethics could not possibly overlap completely in practice. Man always fell short of the ethical ideal. It couldn’t be any other way for Donoso, insofar as he embraced the doctrine of Original Sin, and did so with increasing intensity. The Christian ideal, no matter how far he remained from it, was however present in his politics. Donoso measured all his activity against it. Normatively, at least, the sphere of political activity was to remain within the sphere of ethics.

Donoso Versus the Machiavellians

To better approximate the upper limit of Donoso’s statecraft, it is instructive to compare him to a political realist of a very different sort, namely, Niccolò Machiavelli, the Renaissance progenitor of realpolitik. At first glance, there are amusing parallels between the political lives of Donoso and Machiavelli. They occupied similar positions in the body politic: both acted as civil servants, diplomats and advisors to monarchs—but never as protagonists or heads of state. They also shared a realist belief in an imperfect world (surely, an outlook that predated and outlived the author of *The Prince*). Valverde even noted Machiavellian instincts in Donoso “when idealism descends to realism, it is to encounter a historical man to whom he frequently denies all ideal character, and so it is reminiscent of Machiavelli’s and Hobbes’.”¹²⁹

Despite this partial biographical and anthropological overlap, statecraft is perceived in radically different terms. In *The Prince*, the standard for political action

¹²⁸ We have considered Max Weber’s landmark study of political ethics. Weber drew a clear theoretical distinction between the ethic of conviction and the ethic of responsibility. The convinced politician prioritizes his ideas and principles. The responsible politician knows that ideas and principles are generalities that are hardly applicable and that he must often make concessions, at times extensive, in order to advance his cause and the reforms he espouses. Concretely, both types coexist in the statesman. Weber never purports to resolve the dramatic tension between these two ethical dispositions. Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*; we have also relied on Fernández García, *Filosofía política y derecho*.

¹²⁹ Valverde, introduction to *Obras completas de Juan Donoso Cortés*, 193.

Machiavelli proposed was *necessity*.¹³⁰ The prince had to direct his political action towards maintaining the state, and the ends justified whatever means are employed.¹³¹ Thus we have Machiavelli's well known maxim, that the statesman must do whatever is necessary to *mantenere lo stato*.¹³²

Machiavelli also proposed a set of virtues, constitutive of *virtù* and distinct from Christian virtue, conducive to the maintenance of the state, and the expansion of its glory.¹³³ For Machiavelli, pagan values were courage, strength, achievement, discipline, vigor and fortitude. Christian values, instead, were mercy, charity, sacrifice, forgiveness of one's enemies, contempt for the goods of this world and faith in an afterlife.¹³⁴ Machiavelli's original insight—and in affirming this we are following Berlin—was that

¹³⁰ "It is essential for a Prince who desires to maintain his position, to have learned how to be other than good, and to use or not to use his goodness as necessity requires" Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 40.

¹³¹ "And you are to understand...that a Prince...cannot observe all those rules of conduct in respect whereof men are accounted good, being often forced, in order to maintain the state, to act in opposition to good faith, charity, humanity and religion." Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 46.

¹³² Leo Strauss considered that Machiavelli had spearheaded political modernity by reversing the classical relationship between the state and virtue. For Machiavelli, says Strauss, "virtue must not be understood as that for the sake of which the commonwealth exists, but virtue exists exclusively for the sake of the commonwealth; political life proper is not subject to morality; morality is not possible outside of political society; it presupposes political society; political society cannot be established and preserved by staying within the limits of morality, for the simple reason that the effect or the conditioned cannot precede the cause or condition" Strauss, "The Three Waves of Modernity," 86-87; In Machiavelli's universe, two variables determined the statesman's success in maintaining the state. *Virtù* stood for the prowess, proficiency and power through which a man can bend the will of others and take control of history. *Fortuna* meant all the fortuitous forces that escape our control. History, in this view, is an irresolvable tension between the two. Thus, the Machiavellian calculus of successful statecraft was the maximization of *virtù* and the minimization, or taming of, *fortuna*.

¹³³ It is important to stress that Machiavelli's idea of statecraft was, as much as Donoso's, informed by ethics. For Machiavelli, the sphere of political activity was also to remain within the sphere of ethics. But it is a very different ethical universe. Here, we agree with Isaiah Berlin. Alternatively, that Machiavelli was the first to sever politics from ethics had been the persuasion of the classic studies by Benedetto Croce, Jacques Maritain and Allan H. Gilbert. Regardless, their reflections are surely worth recovering. Gilbert said "In these things lies the true originality of Machiavelli; all may be used up in his conviction that government is an independent art in an imperfect world." Maritain said "Finally, the 'grammar of power' and the recipes of success written by Machiavelli are the work of a pure artist, and of a pure artist of that Italian Renaissance where the great heritage of the antique and Christian mind, falling in jeopardy, blossomed into the most beautiful, delightful and poisonous flowers. What makes the study of Machiavelli extremely instructive for a philosopher, is the fact that nowhere is it possible to find a more purely artistic conception of politics. And here is his chief philosophical fault, if it is true that politics belongs to the field of the 'praktikon' (to do), not of the 'poietikon' (to make), and is by essence a branch—the principal branch, according to Aristotle—of ethics...Thus, merely artistic politics, liberated from ethics, that is, from the practical knowledge of man, from the science of human acts, from truly human finalities and truly human doings, is a corpse of political wisdom and practical prudence." Maritain, "The End of Machiavellianism," 7.

¹³⁴ Berlin, *The Originality of Machiavelli*, 45.

he recognized that these two sets of practical virtues as mutually exclusive. Machiavelli did not make explicit the rejection of Christianity in favor of paganism, although he definitely deemed the latter to be superior for ruling and the public domain. Instead, Machiavelli placed the two sets of values “side by side, with the implicit invitation to men to choose either a good, virtuous, private life, or a good, successful, social existence, but not both.”¹³⁵

One possible objection to the radical bifurcation attributed to Machiavelli by Berlin would be to question the claim of incompatibility between Christian and pagan virtues. Fortitude, for instance, is one of the cardinal virtues in the Catholic tradition of which Donoso is a part of. In turn, this tradition understands itself as building upon, complementing and elevating the horizons of the so-called noble pagans and proto-Christians such as Plato.

Even if in fact we were to relax Machiavelli’s claims of exclusivity, Donoso’s crisis does appear to unfold between the poles of piety and *virtù*, under the terms posited by Machiavelli, as expounded by Berlin.¹³⁶ Indeed, Donoso himself, who is human— all too human— confessed to be lured by glory championed by Machiavelli, as in the manuscript reproduced in Part I. In Donoso’s time, the capacity to actualize the temptation to the worldly kingdoms was amplified significantly by the power and technology at the disposal of the practitioner of the new statecraft.

But to Donoso, the trade-off between religious limits and pagan glory came at a very real cost. The moral emergency was not merely a figment of the imagination. The immortal soul was at stake. Thus, there were modes of statecraft that Machiavelli would have been willing to pursue, bent on his maxim to *mantenere lo stato*, that Donoso rejected, at least hypothetically. In the 1848 *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, for example, Donoso proclaimed, “Two things are impossible to me: condemning dictatorship and exercising it. That is why...I am incapacitated to govern; I cannot accept government in

¹³⁵ Berlin, *The Originality of Machiavelli*, 71.

¹³⁶ Most likely unconsciously, for Donoso scarcely mentioned Machiavelli throughout his oeuvre.

conscience; I could not accept it without placing half of myself at war with the other half, without placing my instinct and reason at war.”¹³⁷

Donoso was not exactly a Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus or a Jefferson, both of whom renounced power from the pinnacle of the body politic. Donoso never reached such heights. Nevertheless, the *Discurso sobre la dictadura* reveals reluctance in Donoso’s attitude towards raw political power. He was persistently unwilling to lose sight of the religious limit, even with the health of the polity at stake. Donoso never sought to amass power for its own sake, not even in the potentially advantageous revolutionary moment when political power was reshuffled. Certainly, in terms of political praxis, the exigencies of Christian statesmanship proved more restrictive than those of pagan *virtù*.

Thus, while Machiavelli and Donoso are brought together by biographical parallels and certain realist traits, they are set apart by the specifically Christian limit that permeated Donoso’s practical statecraft. Donoso’s arduous pondering, and his eventual crisis of statecraft would have seemed like an excessive burden to Machiavelli: an unnecessary restraint on the glory of *virtù*. If we were to follow Machiavelli’s mundane criterion strictly, Donoso would be a prime candidate to be one of his torn men, who wander between the two competing sets of values, and who “take certain middle ways that are very injurious, they are unable to be altogether good or altogether bad”, and who, in sum, vacillate and fail.¹³⁸

No doubt, Donoso did not operate politically according to Machiavelli’s criterion, privileging the mundane. He had faith in a transcendent reality, as well as in an immanent reality where religious limits to action exist in relation to higher and truer reality. This was the criterion against which all men were to measure their actions, including statesmen. Donoso never lost sight of this upper limit in his political practice, seeing that this limit could be shunned, but ultimately never ignored.

In sum, Donoso was a melancholy statesman, that carried his cross until the end, a weight that the Machiavellians will continue to consider as the impediment of heavy

¹³⁷ “This is why, gentleman, and I appeal to the testimony of all those who know me, none can stand up, here nor outside of here, who have stumbled upon me in the path of ambition, so full with people,” continues Donoso. Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, 306-307.

¹³⁸ Berlin, *The Originality of Machiavelli*, 47.

baggage.¹³⁹ Donoso thought of himself, not as an artist of the political as the Machiavelli of Maritain, but as an agent of order, guided by the principle of authority. His duty as a statesman was not creative but defensive. It was to secure the conditions for religion to flourish. If we trace the etymology of the word religion, we will find the Latin *religare*, or “to religate.” And that, for Donoso, was precisely the task of the altar, and not of the throne: to bind us anew to the Divine.

Against Political Eschatologies

We have examined how Machiavelli and Donoso set out from similar realist anthropologies of man as a deeply imperfect creature. But Donoso consciously carried out his statecraft within a specifically Christian eschatology, unlike Machiavelli.

For the most part, Donoso got hold of Augustine’s theology of history. In fact, the philosopher of history Karl Löwith considered Donoso’s *Ensayo* as another *Civitas Dei*.¹⁴⁰ “While the lords of the history of the world are Alexanders and Caesars, Napoleons and Hitlers, Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Kingdom of God and therefore of secular history only in so far as the history of the world hides a redemptive meaning...merely as a background and as empirical instruments in God’s dealing with man are empires and world-historical persons drawn into the orbit of the biblical perspective of history in the Old and New testament,” writes Löwith in his *Meaning in History*.¹⁴¹ Presumably then, Machiavelli’s pagan ethic of *virtù* and glory paled next to Christianity’s hold on the redemptive key of history, assumed by Donoso.

According to this understanding of history, temporal power inevitably decayed, just as the ancient Republics that Machiavelli revered also perished. Augustine, says Löwith, “rejects the traditional interpretation of Rome as the fourth empire of Daniel’s prophecy, because he rejects in principle any *world*-historical, i.e., political

¹³⁹ We have found parallels between Donoso and “St. Augustine’s melancholy soldier, who understood both that his war was just and that killing, even in a just war, is a terrible thing to do.” Walzer, “Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands,” 167.

¹⁴⁰ “If the idea of progress had been presented to a Greek, it would have struck him as irreligious, defying cosmic order and fate. And when it was presented to a radical Christian of the nineteenth century, it had the same effect. Challenged by Proudhon’s thesis that each of our progress is a victory by which we crush providential divinity, Donoso Cortés answered with another *Civitas Dei*.” Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 200.

¹⁴¹ Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 187.

eschatology. Augustine personally believed in the survival of the Roman Empire, but he considered neither the survival nor the decline of an empire as a matter of final importance in the order of the last things.”¹⁴²

Donoso was a realist in this Augustinian tradition.¹⁴³ Like Augustine, he did not expect too much of this world, nor of its politics.¹⁴⁴ He accepted the reality of our fallen condition amidst the *civitas terrena* and the limits it imposed on temporal order. The vehicle for Christian universalism was the Church before the empire.¹⁴⁵ The former was the custodian of redemptive forces and the promise of salvation.

¹⁴² Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 168.

¹⁴³ We have worked with Henry Bettenson’s translation of *City of God*; Diego Sevilla Andrés has dedicated several studies to expounding this relationship. See for example Sevilla Andrés, “El impacto de San Agustín en Donoso. Las ‘Dos Ciudades’ y las ‘Dos Civilizaciones.’”; This brand of realism is an old one in Christianity. While the standard-bearer within the Catholic tradition is Saint Augustine, it is present in nineteenth century statecraft through the influential protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr and his political disciples, notably the diplomat George F. Kennan.

¹⁴⁴ The parallels between Donoso Cortés and the English philosopher Michael Oakeshott are plenty and theoretically fruitful. The latter’s distinction between the “politics of faith” and the “politics of scepticism” illuminates our discussion. These two “styles” of politics are the poles to which the pendulum of modern politics swings to. The politics of faith “understands governing as an ‘unlimited’ activity”; government is omniscient...the object in government is ‘salvation’ or ‘perfection.’” Oakeshott identified a common root in all the modern iterations of the politics of faith. Namely, Pelagianism: a heresy that denies the lasting effects of the fall to the point that perfection is achievable through the exercise of our free will without the aid of divine grace. Notably, Donoso had written to Cardinal Fornari that all modern errors could be boiled down to heresies long condemned by the Church. In Oakeshott’s account, Spinoza, Pascal, Hobbes, Hume, Montesquieu, Burke, Paine, Bentham, Hegel, Coleridge, Calhoun and Macaulay conform the ranks of skepticism (in turn, we may add Donoso to the list). In spite of their obvious differences, they all rejected “the belief that governing is the imposition of a comprehensive pattern of activity upon a community and a consequent suspicion of government invested with overwhelming power.” Of course, Donoso was a skeptic strictly in the political sphere. Elsewhere, he embraced a comprehensive and fideistic way of being in the world, namely, Catholicism. He was not skeptical of absolute claims, which the Church had the authority to teach, but rather scrutinous of their source, particularly if it was political; According to Oakeshott the most influential exponent of the politics of skepticism was Augustine, who theorized the distinction between politics and religion, “the earliest triumph of the politics of scepticism.” After Augustine, it been the task of the skeptics to “recall political activity from the frontier of religion, and to be always drawing attention to the values of civil order and *tranquillitas* whenever the vision of a total pattern of activity, imposed because it is believed to represent ‘truth’ or ‘justice,’ threatens to obliterate everything else.” Oakeshott, *The Politics of Faith and the Politics of Scepticism*, 80-81.

¹⁴⁵ It is a theme that the categories of modern political theory are theological concepts that have been secularized. In Löwith’s account of the process, “The revolution which had been proclaimed within the framework of an eschatological faith and with reference to a perfect monastic life was taken over, five centuries later, by a philosophical priesthood, which interpreted the process of secularization as a ‘spiritual’ realization of the Kingdom of God on earth. As an attempt at realization, the spiritual pattern of Lessing, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel could be transposed into the positivistic and materialistic schemes of Comte and Marx. The third dispensation of the Joachites [Franciscan followers of Joachim of Fiori] reappeared as a third International and a third *Reich*, inaugurated by a *dux* or a *Führer* who was acclaimed as a savior and acclaimed by millions with *Heil!* The source of all formidable attempts

The specifically Christian character of Donoso's realism was its subordination to this eschatological apparatus. Thus, the philosophical sources of Donosian and Machiavellian realism, Christian and pagan respectively, set them on divergent trajectories of statecraft in practice.¹⁴⁶ Together, Donoso's spiritual Augustinianism and practical situational conservatism made him a Christian realist.

Beyond this core eschatological vision, Donoso's realism was sensitive to the particularities of political cultures, and the elements that make concrete political orders workable. In Donoso's words, "the philosophers generally have up until now classified Governments by their forms; we shall classify them for their diverse tendencies to resolve the social problem, and this classification shall be more luminous and profound."¹⁴⁷ Governments then, in their diverse forms and configurations, were to be judged by their ability to uphold the principle of authority and preserve the integrity of society.

Donoso's criterion was largely consistent with the Catholic Church's position with respect to particular political forms. Imatz has commented that Donoso reflects "the traditionalist Catholic points of view by which a consequent Catholic must become monarchical or republican insofar as the monarchy or the republic guarantee the conservation and prosperity of religion."¹⁴⁸ Historically, at the very least in her magisterium, the Church does not wed itself to any regime type, so long as her rights and those of God are preserved.

If we consider once again the Donosian principle of authority and the underlying law of unity and variety, we find that it was dogmatic in the abstract, but remarkably open about its configuration on the historically-determined, concrete and uneven political canvas. Beneath a supra-rational kernel of ultimate ends that was non-

to fulfil history by and within itself is the passionate but fearful and humble expectation of Franciscan Spirituals, that a last conflict will bring history to its climax and end." Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 159. In our view, Donoso was the original and deepest interpreter of the socialist incarnation of Christian Eschatology.

¹⁴⁶ While deeply attuned to the fallenness of man, Christian realism offers the accompanying doctrines of elevating grace, the repose of forgiveness and the promise of redemption, concepts that Machiavelli's pagan world of *virtú* is devoid of.

¹⁴⁷ Donoso Cortés, *Lecciones de Derecho Político*, 335.

¹⁴⁸ Donoso Cortés, *Contra el liberalismo*, 67.

negotiable, there appears to have been flexibility for the selection of proximate means, the formulation of rational objectives, and the execution of a realist statecraft.

In this light, it is worth briefly returning to the *folk theory*. The *folk theory* has been based on the notion of a conversion, including political conversion whereby Donoso moved from doctrinaire liberalism to traditionalism. A great deal has been written within the *folk theory* about the coherence of Donoso's ideology and political affiliation. In response, we have attempted to show that Donoso's theory of authority and government make up the core of his statecraft.

In our analysis, these oscillations between political camps are superficial, and respond to the deeper requirements of Donoso's rationale for Catholic statecraft—to defend divine authority by way of government action and to conserve social integrity. Thus, Donoso was afforded room to maneuver between ideologies. At the end of the day, ideologies were to be judged with respect to their tendency to preserve authority, given the underlying social conditions. And Donoso maneuvered without falling into—at least not terminally—the ideological contradictions that so much of Donosian literature is keen to highlight.

Ideologies as well as situational conservatism were always under the aegis of Donoso's style of Christian realism. Donoso's course of action is accurately reflected in what Winston Churchill described as “keeping the ship on an even keel,” which in politics is “the truest consistency.”¹⁴⁹

Statecraft for the Freedom of the Church

Still, social conservation was not the ultimate *mundane* end to which Donoso's statecraft was ordered. There was in Donoso a constant if indirect concern with the preservation of the freedom of the Catholic Church amid the temporal order.

¹⁴⁹ “A statesman, in contact with the moving current of events and anxious to keep the ship on an even keel and steer a steady course, may lean all his weight now on one side and now on the other. His arguments in each case, when contrasted, can be shown to be not only very different in character, but contradictory in spirit and opposite in direction: yet his object will throughout have remained the same. His resolves, his wishes, his outlook may have been unchanged, his methods may be verbally irreconcilable. We cannot call this inconsistency. In fact it may be claimed to be the truest consistency. The only way a man can remain consistent amid changing circumstances is to change with them while preserving the same dominating purpose” Smith, *Political Philosophy*, 255-256.

To begin to grasp the relationship between means and ends at play, we may recover Kennedy's assertion that for Donoso, when it came to the Social Question, "the cure lay far beyond the province of government", and with "the forces of religion."¹⁵⁰ Indeed, the *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, Donoso relativized the scope of the commissary dictatorship he was simultaneously proposing:

One thing alone can avoid catastrophe, one and no more; [catastrophe] cannot be avoided by giving out more freedom, more guarantees, new constitutions, [catastrophe] is avoided by all of us procuring, so far as our strength reaches, provoke a healthy, religious reaction. Now, is this religious reaction possible? It is possible; but, is it probable? Gentlemen, here I speak with the deepest sadness; I do not believe it probable. I have seen and met many individuals that left faith and came back to it; unfortunately, I have never seen a people return to faith after having lost it.¹⁵¹

And yet it does not follow from this speech, nor from primacy of the spiritual over the temporal inherent to Donoso's Augustinian tradition, that statecraft is superfluous. The second part of Kennedy's argument implied that participating in statecraft entails hypocrisy.¹⁵² In point of fact, for Donoso, statecraft has an ancillary but critical mission.

To grasp the fundamental importance of government, we must first recall Donoso's cosmology. We have already explored Donoso's metaphysical notion of authority. His view in the *Lecciones* was that authority was simply theocentric. By the time of the *Ensayo*, it would take on a specifically Catholic theological depth by alluding also to the Holy Trinity as the keystone of the law of unity and variety. The Universe was the variety of hierarchy and the unity of divine authority. In Donoso's mind, the Church in its temporal and social dimension was ingrained in the fabric of Creation. As we have seen, government was the activity by which the social organism kept itself together; preserving order, while respecting freedom. To govern was to resist, said Donoso. It was incumbent upon government to prevent intrusions on the organic

¹⁵⁰ Kennedy, "Donoso Cortés as Servant of the State", 523.

¹⁵¹ Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, 320.

¹⁵² "And at any rate the cure [to the Social Question] lay far beyond the province of government. But the man of action refused to be consistent: he continued to be the energetic servant of government and to act as though the institutions government were still of basic importance." Kennedy, "Donoso Cortés as Servant of the State," 522. Pace Kennedy, Donoso is actually convinced of the crucial purpose of government. Namely, to carve out a temporal peace for the Church.

social whole that the Church represented. Thus, government was purposed with freeing the Church to function in its temporal dimension.¹⁵³

According to Catholic doctrine, the Church must fundamentally be understood as part of the spiritual order. It is the *Mystici corporis Christi*, or the Mystical Body of Christ on Earth.¹⁵⁴ Regarding the relationship between the Mystical Body and political Augustinianism, Quentin Skinner writes that “Augustine had pictured political society as a divinely ordained order imposed on fallen men as a remedy for their sins...Augustine’s view of political society had merely been ancillary to an eschatology in which the life of the pilgrim on earth had been seen as little more than a preparation for the life to come.”¹⁵⁵ The Church as the Mystical Body existed so that our souls may be saved. Donoso’s statecraft was, at the highest level, aimed at defending the freedom of the Church as the *Navis Petri* or “Barque of St. Peter.”

Donoso placed his political realism of particulars in service of his spiritual idealism of universals. His ideal was not government but the Roman Church, the true custodian of man’s link to the Transcendent. Schmitt noted that Donoso’s uniquely permanent political position is to secure the freedom of the Church,

The only thing that remains inalterable through the changes of ideas is [Donoso’s] interest for the Papal States and for the sovereignty of the Pope. For the rest, he follows changes in the situation to the day. He does not think of declaring himself a fixed proponent of this or that system of foreign policy.

¹⁵³ With respect to the pilgrim Church on Earth and its relation to political society, Donoso merely affirmed the doctrine of the Gelasian Dyarchy, by which temporal power is a separate sphere, that is nonetheless indirectly subordinated to the eternal authority of the Church. To be sure, in actuality the proper delineation of temporal power with respect to spiritual power is not the sealed discussion Donoso takes it to be in theory. Indeed, it was the central political question running through the Middle Ages. The issue is obviously less prevalent in today’s “secular” West, but nonetheless vital to those concerned with the meaning of rendering to God and Caesar what is rightfully theirs. Donoso for one considered that the Church was the first to teach “the distinction between civil and religious power, between God and Caesar, between the pontiff and the king...a most fecund truth, unknown to the peoples until the Catholic Church revealed it to the world.” Donoso Cortés, *Pío IX*, 199; In the same way Donoso dismisses charges of absolutism, as we will see in Chapter III, he dismisses those of theocracy. In his 1852 *Carta al Director de la ‘Revue des Deux Mondes’*, Donoso will ascertain that “In the same way that submission to divine precepts does not carry, explicit or implicitly, the institution of a theocratic government; the recognition in theory and practice, of the fundamental truths of which the Church is depository, does not carry with it...its domination in temporal matters. Never has the Church confused these two things...while it seeks and asks for its principles the empire of the world...it has always shown departure from, if not horror at interfering with the temporal direction of human things.” Donoso Cortés, *Carta al director de la ‘Revue des Deux Mondes’*, 766. While the historical accuracy of such a claim is obviously questionable, this does not bear on the validity of the ideal.

¹⁵⁴ Pius XII, *Mystici corporis Christi*.

¹⁵⁵ Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 50.

England is not always considered by him as an adversary, nor Russia, as a conservative power, as an unquestionable ally.¹⁵⁶

Schmitt also pointed to the frequent changes in Donoso's foreign policy positions. At different points in his diplomatic dispatches, Donoso feared German unification along Prussian nationalistic and essentially protestant lines; he expressed reservations for Louis Napoleon's reactionary populism; and for a moment even considered that England could be a conservative force for good in the continent—if only Newman and the Oxford Movement could lead her back to Catholic tracks. Through all of these thoughts, Donoso's orientation to Rome was unwavering.¹⁵⁷

At the highest level of abstraction, society was to be kept as a coherent whole, that the Church of Rome may deploy its saving power and the supernatural forces of religion may act on its members individually. Notwithstanding his lifelong pessimism with respect to the possibilities of political success, statecraft, as understood by Donoso, had to pursue the limited aim of carving out a peace for the freedom of the Church, by which religious renewal could take place.

This was also the policy that Donoso pursued concretely, in the context of the Revolutions of 1848 in the Italian states. The revolution had erupted in Rome and the Republic of Mazzini, Saffi and Armellini was declared. Pellegrino Rossi, who had been Donoso's doctrinaire liberal counterpart in the *Polémica con el Dr. Rossi*, and who had since been appointed papal premier, was assassinated. Pope Pius IX was forced to flee to Gaeta. In response, the Pope had called upon the Catholic powers; Austria, France, Spain and the Two Sicilies to restore his authority.

Donoso interceded diplomatically in favor of the papacy, and Narvaéz's government sent an expeditionary force to Gaeta that ultimately saw minimal action.¹⁵⁸ Napoleon III, seeking to consolidate his conservative coalition domestically, to recover France's prestige amongst Catholic Europe abroad, and to dispute Austria's influence

¹⁵⁶ Schmitt, *Interpretación Europea de Donoso Cortés*, 122.

¹⁵⁷ Gowan, "Donoso Cortés: Un Español Singular," 177.

¹⁵⁸ Donoso Cortés, *Despachos desde Berlín (1849)*, 347-351; It is hard to gauge the specific impact of Donoso's diplomatic dealings solely from the dispatch to Narvaéz reproduced by Valverde. Suárez's biography provides additional detail on the exchanges between Donoso, Narvaéz, and his minister Pedro José Pidal, suggesting that Donoso influenced both to finally send the troops. Suárez, *Vida y Obra de Juan Donoso Cortés*, 709-710.

in the Italian peninsula, sent a military contingent that laid siege to Rome and restored the Pope in 1849.

Rather than intervening directly, the Spanish government set up a system of international diplomatic conferences amongst Catholic nations in Gaeta to coordinate their actions. A diplomatic dispatch doubting the effectiveness of these conferences reveals Donoso's realist instincts.¹⁵⁹ "Instead," wrote Donoso, "I would have begun by sending troops and then I would have invited all the Catholic peoples to act accordingly; having verified the restoration, I would have provoked a congress, with the purpose of introducing in European public law a series of principles, whose official proclamation has been made necessary by the latest revolts."¹⁶⁰

At any rate, Donoso made explicit this "series of principles" regarding the temporal power of the Church (at that point embodied in the Papal States), and the concomitant policy positions.

The temporal power of the pope, the unique guarantee of his spiritual independence, is placed, *de facto* and *de jure*, under the protection of the Catholic world. The Catholic world, composed of independent and sovereign nations, the right and the duty to protect the Supreme Pontiff in his still possession of his temporal sovereignty resides completely in all of them together and in each of them separately *in solidum*.¹⁶¹

Furthermore,

The Catholic world has the right to demand the independence of the Supreme Pontiff. As the only guarantee of his independence, it has the right to demand he be sovereign. Since the pope can cease to be sovereign through his own abandonment or by the usurpation of his people, it is declared that the pope can not diminish his own power *motu proprio*, nor can the people through any declaration or contract of sorts. As a guarantee against a liberal pope [liberal in this context meaning attuned to the cause of the Italian nationalists], the Catholic world would demand the explicit recognition of these principles by the popes; as the popes guarantee against the people, the Catholic world would proclaim its right to garrison Rome; as the pope's guarantee against foreign nations, the temporal denaturalization of the troops garrisoning Rome would be proclaimed,

¹⁵⁹ "Generally speaking, diplomatic conferences do not serve to annul the consummated facts, but to give them a certain legitimacy through the consent of the peoples. A congress will not be of much use to restore the Pope; it will be of use to prevent a new downfall after having restored him." Donoso Cortés, *Despachos desde Berlín (1849)*, 350.

¹⁶⁰ Donoso Cortés, *Despachos desde Berlín (1849)*, 350.

¹⁶¹ Donoso Cortés, *Despachos desde Berlín (1849)*, 348.

subjecting them, during their time in service, to the exclusive authority of the pope.¹⁶²

The issue of the temporal sovereignty of the Pope is as fascinating as it is cumbersome.¹⁶³ Addressing it in full beyond the scope of this investigation.¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless, our intention is to highlight Donoso's position towards Rome, and his desire to incorporate the rights of a sovereign papacy into European law.

Tying our reasoning back to the *folk theory* and its attempts at resolving Donoso's political incoherence, we conclude instead that Donoso's statecraft is made intelligible, not by conversion as in the *folk theory*, but by recognizing his overarching effort to conserve the integrity of society in order to secure the temporal independence of Church.

Given the predominance of Donoso's Catholic universalism, we are inclined to consider his 1852 epistle *Carta al Cardenal Fornari* his crowning achievement.¹⁶⁵ We also suspect it to be the piece of statecraft which Donoso would have treasured the most, in light of its direct relation to the Throne of St. Peter. Cardinal Fornari, acting on behalf of the Pontiff Pius IX, in a supranational diplomatic effort commissioned a handful of thinkers with the intellectual task of addressing the sociopolitical challenges to the Catholic faith. Specifically, the task was to frame Catholic doctrine in the context of the Social Question and the mounting revolutionary pressures across Europe. Among them was Donoso, who provided a conceptual scheme and vocabulary to counteract the novel and pressing challenges of the 1848 revolutions.

The epistle is described by Suárez as gaining in "precision, clarity and even logical force," it is "pure and distilled thought, expressed in brilliant form...more austere and sober than previous writings."¹⁶⁶ In turn, we highlight the definitive equilibrium

¹⁶² Donoso Cortés, *Despachos desde Berlín (1849)*, 350.

¹⁶³ The so-called Roman Question was not mitigated until the Lateran Pacts of 1929.

¹⁶⁴ Donoso also addresses the question in the *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, amongst other places. Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, 320-321.

¹⁶⁵ Per Suárez's biography of Donoso, Louis Veuillot and the Donosian scholars Hans Juretschke and Santiago Galindo Herrero considered this Donoso's best written work. Suárez, *Vida y Obra de Juan Donoso Cortés*, 994.

¹⁶⁶ Suárez, *Vida y Obra de Juan Donoso Cortés*, 995.

Donoso's thought reaches between material and spiritual interests.¹⁶⁷ At any rate, the letter to Fornari certainly constitutes the most synthetic exposition of Donoso's mature thought.

Donoso's influence is felt in papal documents up until and including the publication of the *Syllabus of Errors*, published alongside the papal encyclical *Quanta cura* in 1864. In turn, *Quanta cura* would be followed by *Rerum Novarum*. Together, they would go on to conform the body of the Catholic Social Teaching, and inspire Christian Democracy and the political movements under its banner.¹⁶⁸

With respect to the supranational ends of statecraft, namely, the freedom of the universal Roman Church, Donoso summed the matter up clearly in the letter to Fornari, where he proclaimed "the superiority of Church over state or to say it all in one phrase the superiority of God over man."¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ "It is absurd to suppose...that the religion that we profess and the Church that contains it arrest or look down upon the free expansion of public wealth, the correct solution of economic questions and the growth of material interests, because even if it is true that religion does not set out to make peoples potent, but blessed; nor to make men rich but holy, it is no less true that one of its noble teachings consists of the revelation to man of his providential commission to transform Nature whole and put it at his service by means of his labor. What the Church seeks is a certain equilibrium between material and moral and religious interests; what it seeks in that equilibrium is that...the first place be occupied by moral and religious interests followed by material interests...reason tells us and History shows us that only this preponderance can foil the great catastrophes latent wherever the preponderance or the exclusive growth of material interests ferments great concupiscences." Donoso Cortés, *Carta al Cardenal Fornari*, 751-752.

¹⁶⁸ Monsegú, *Clave teológica de la historia según Donoso Cortés*, 26; According to Professor Imatz, Donoso Cortés can be considered a precursor of social Catholicism in its two versions: social-traditionalist and social-liberal (later Christian Democrat). Donoso Cortés, *Contra el liberalismo*, 62.

¹⁶⁹ Donoso Cortés, *Carta al Cardenal Fornari*, 759.

III. 1848: The Revolt Against Limits and the New Statecraft

The Shifting Sands of Statecraft

We are now in a stronger position to return to the crisis that opened our investigation. Donoso's quandary set in as the qualitative and quantitative conditions of statecraft fundamentally changed. By 1848, the implicit and explicit scope of state action differed from what Donoso had encountered joining the ranks of the Ministry of Justice 1833 at 23 years of age.

Donoso feared the convergence of socialist ideology, voluntarist masses, and technological capacity unto a single locus in the state. State capacity had increased rapidly, on the back of the rationalist impulse of centralization and transformational technologies such as the telegraph. The apparatus of repression was vast. There was nothing to oppose it as ancient moral and patrimonial resistances had been levelled. According to Alberto Spektorowski "the great problem for Donoso was society, which had been dissolved by a long process of secularization into the liberal tyrannical state."¹⁷⁰

The 1848 Revolutions erupted simultaneously across the continent and consummated Donoso's fears. He gazed into a new epoch in which a socialist movement backed by the principle of popular sovereignty and leveraging the physical force of the excitable masses, would conquer the means of state machinery to pursue its own ends. The limitation of power had become physically, technologically, and intellectually impossible given the climate of opinion in 1848 Europe.

The Severing of the Links to Divine Authority

The point in history had come when serving the state, paradoxically, meant rejecting the principle of authority.¹⁷¹ The self-legitimizing state, independent from

¹⁷⁰ Spektorowski, "Maistre, Donoso Cortés, and the Legacy of Catholic Authoritarianism," 295.

¹⁷¹ Gallego García, *Estado de Disolución*, 65. This conundrum led a prominent Donosian scholar, Dietmar Westemeyer, to consider whether Donoso's ideal society was stateless. Gallego García is correct to point out the difference between state (a historical political form) and government (the

society, was also emancipated from any notion of Pauline *potestas*, grounded in God. The decoupling of *auctoritas* and *potestas* appeared to be historically complete and politically irreversible. Only an unaccountable *potestas* remained, legitimizing a power unimagined by any ruler in history. And this unauthorized power was something that Donoso, who had been “a man of government,” would not serve.

In this context, Donoso struggled to remain faithful to an energetic but limited style of Christian statecraft, that had been suitable for a world that was now expiring. Donoso arrived with an exhausted conception of government to this critical juncture in history. Donoso became increasingly frustrated given his awkward position in the emerging order, and wary of his complicity in the expansion of a totalizing state that was an affront to his fundamental vision of the Good.

The Consolidation of the High-Modernist State

Counterrevolutionaries, like Louis Napoleon, were not exempt from operating within this new paradigm of statist voluntarism. Hence, Donoso had mixed feelings for Napoleon’s Caesarism.¹⁷² Donoso valued his ability to arrest the revolution. But all the while, he knew all too well that the stage was set for socialist ideologues to conquer, in Napoleonic fashion, the newly independent machinery of the state. Per the account of James C. Scott in *Seeing Like a State*, this was a time in which the high-modernist state literally “discovered society,” to subjugate it through technical schemes of social perfection.¹⁷³

Karl Marx’s *The Eighteenth of Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* described Napoleon III’s 1851 coup,

All revolutions perfected [the state machinery] instead of breaking it. The parties, which alternately contended for domination, regarded the possession of this huge state structure as the chief spoils of the victor. But under the absolute monarchy, during the first Revolution, and under Napoleon the bureaucracy was only the means of preparing the class rule of the bourgeoisie. Under the Restoration,

timeless notion of command). But the state would soon absorb politics whole. In light of this, Donoso might be said to prefigure the Christian Anarchism of Jacques Ellul.

¹⁷² Donoso Cortés, *Despachos desde París (1851-1853)*, 835. Throughout the letter, Donoso draws a fascinating analogy between Julius Caesar and Augustus, and Napoleon Bonaparte and Napoleon III, considering the forces that brought both families to power; Napoleon and Donoso became acquainted during the latter’s ambassadorship in Paris.

¹⁷³ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 90-93.

under Louis Philippe, under the parliamentary republic, it was the instrument of the ruling class, however much it strove for power of its own. Only under the second Bonaparte does the state seem to have made itself completely independent. The state machinery has so strengthened itself vis-à-vis civil society that [Napoleon III] suffices for its head—an adventurer dropped in from abroad, raised on the shoulders of a drunken soldiery which he bought with whisky and sausages and to which he has to keep throwing more sausages.¹⁷⁴

Thus, Marx believed that Napoleon’s “overthrow of the parliamentary republic contained within itself the germ of the triumph of the proletarian revolution,” to the extent that it coincided with the historical turning point at which the state gained independence from society, and subjected it.¹⁷⁵

In the *Brumaire*, Marx recounted an exclamation by Guizot, *C’est le triomphe complet et définitif du Socialisme!* Marx fundamentally agrees with Guizot’s characterization. He believed himself to be witnessing the definitive and complete downfall of bourgeois domination as the ineluctable course of dialectical materialism deterministically progressing through history. No one, however, recognized the downfall of continental parliamentary liberalism as early and profoundly as Donoso. Liberalism’s naive focus on institutional design and proceduralism could never placate the overwhelming appeal of socialism. Neither could a sociologically weakened Catholic Church, for the time being, with its otherworldly bias, calling for resignation at a time of vast material demands. Alternatively,

...socialism affirms that man’s nature is healthy and society sick; when it sets the former in open war with the latter to extirpate the evil that is in it with the good that is in him; when it summons all men to rise up and rebel against all social institutions, there is no doubt that in this way of framing and resolving the question, if there is a lot that is false, there is something gigantic and grandiose, worthy of the terrible majesty of the matter.¹⁷⁶

Donoso foresaw that this colossal ideology would soon take hold of the High-Modernist State.

¹⁷⁴ Marx, *The Eighteenth of Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 61-62.

¹⁷⁵ Marx, *The Eighteenth of Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 61; Suárez is keen to point out that Donoso had widely anticipated Marx’s diagnosis of Louis Napoleon rise, “Marx wrote in 1852, after the fact, but Donoso announced it more than two years earlier, and even predicted the unviability of the monarchy, Louis Napoleon’s allergies to the Republic and, as a consequence of a process that Donoso had been describing in his dispatches to the Spanish government week after week, the proclamation of Empire.” Suárez, *Vida y Obra de Juan Donoso Cortés*, 917.

¹⁷⁶ Donoso Cortés, *Ensayo sobre el catolicismo, el liberalismo y el socialismo*, 599.

Donoso's *Discurso sobre la situación de España* captured the ideological climate conducive to the expansionist state. Donoso spoke hypothetically, as if from the perspective of a minister,

To a universal responsibility corresponds an absolute power; because absolute power and universal responsibility are correlative things, forcefully correlative. An absolute power, to be so, needs to be an expedited power, and to be expedited it is necessary that it does not find resistances. Before gentlemen, there existed corporations united by the ties of love, united by the ties of religion; these corporations opposed a dyke to all despotisms that wanted to rise up in the nation; those corporations are not compatible with my responsibility, are not compatible with the expedition I need as responsible Minister; allow me to end with them. The naming of all public employees is a gigantic instrument of corruption, but it does not matter; if I do not name all public employees I can't be responsible: if you demand my responsibility, give me the naming of all employees; Local life, municipal life, provincial life, can be good and excellent things; but if I am responsible for everything, only I shall live to do it all myself. By implication, centralization; apoplectic civilization; absolute centralization. All expedients must come to the Ministry, all the gold must come to the public Treasury. These are necessary consequences. By implication, if you accuse me of arbitrariness, I respond that it is you who have made me arbitrary, imposing upon me a responsibility that confers me an absolute power¹⁷⁷

Gallego García highlights the historical depth of Donoso's oratory, "In this magnificent speech, Donoso synthesized the birth of the State and the natural growth of its power. And how the liberal State in its rationalist search for a simplifying geometry, far from limiting power, had taken it to its maximum historical expansion."¹⁷⁸ The logic of an idea advances relentlessly, leveraging technology, leveling resistances it finds along the way, pushing out from a statist center of power, asphyxiating vestiges of a world gone by between reason and the walls of society.

Immersed in the moment, Donoso detected no backstops to the combination of socialism, technology and the state:

In the ancient world tyranny was ferocious and devastating, however, this tyranny was limited physically, because all States were small and because international relations were impossible; consequently, in antiquity there could not be large scale tyrannies save one: that of Rome. But now gentlemen the tracks are prepared for a gigantic tyrant, colossal, universal, immense; all is prepared

¹⁷⁷ Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre la situación de España*, 486

¹⁷⁸ Gallego García, *Estado de Disolución*, 68.

for it...there are no resistances, physical nor moral; there are no physical resistances, because with steamboats and iron tracks there are no frontiers; there are no physical resistances, because with the electric telegraph there is no distance, and there are no moral resistances, because all the spirits are divided and all patriotisms are dead¹⁷⁹

In a rather obscure note by Donoso, we find that technological unity takes on the same sinister character. Theology and biblical analogy are characteristically linked with the political,

The world dreams of a certain gigantic unity that God does not see with good eyes, and that this Lord will not permit, because that unity would be the temple of pride...unity of codes, unity of trends, unity of civilization, administrative unity, commercial, industrial, literary and linguistic unity...the telegraph, the iron tracks, London's democratic committee: see there three great symptoms of that revolution...But God will not permit a unity that is not the unity of the Cross. The democratic Babel will have the same fate as the Babel from the holy books¹⁸⁰

Donoso's reflections pose the vast question of the causal relationship between ideology and technology. Robert Heilbroner approximated the issue in his renowned essay "Do machines make history?" Heilbroner, for one, adopted a soft technological determinism, whereby a technological base determined a social superstructure.¹⁸¹ Likewise, Michael Oakeshott suggested that our technological advancement had created a context for optimism that replaced Christianity with a version of Pelagianism. Only later "the participation of government in a large share of this power was the common condition for the appearance of the politics of faith."¹⁸²

Alternatively, Donoso seems to have been more of an idealist, meaning that ideas held independent causal power, and spurred particular technological orientations. In turn, this orientation had led to the formation of the high-modernist state. Thus, Donoso considered the relationship between ideology and technology and, in addition, political form.

On one occasion, he seemed to ascribe to the pursuit of repressive capacity power over the direction technological development. "Governments did not have enough with a million arms...a million eyes; they desired a million ears, and they had

¹⁷⁹ Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, 318.

¹⁸⁰ Donoso Cortés, *Pensamientos varios*, 981.

¹⁸¹ Heilbroner, "Do Machines make history?"

¹⁸² Oakeshott, *The Politics of Faith and the Politics of Scepticism*, 74.

them with administrative centralization...but this did not suffice because the religious thermometer kept going down...governments said ‘we need the privilege of being everywhere at once’ and they had it, and the telegraph was invented.”¹⁸³ If we follow this line of reasoning, a particularly modern ideological framework sought to imbue the state with universal responsibility.¹⁸⁴ An effective and efficient state required absolute power. In turn, the expectations of such state power demanded the development of technology necessary to bolster it.

Another exponent of the notion that ideas ultimately hold sway over machines was the Christian anarchist Jacques Ellul. For Ellul, ideas like the rationalizing impulse conveyed by Donoso in the *Discurso sobre la situación de España* took hold of an age and pervaded above all else. Ellul underlined a key point found in Marx. While the working masses had looked at technology with some suspicion since the outset of the Industrial Revolution, Marxist ideology had managed to reconcile them to technology, incorporating the advances of “technique” into the narrative of material liberation.¹⁸⁵

Unlimited power as “anti-Christian power”

Working within the tradition of Christian political thought, challenged by the technological leviathan, Donoso was preoccupied with the problem of the limitation of power. The key text to understand Donoso’s mature thinking on the matter is his 1852 *Carta al Director de la ‘Revue des Deux Mondes.’*¹⁸⁶

In principle, Donoso believed that power was to be limited because “a Power without limits is a power that is essentially anti-Christian, and an affront to both the majesty of God and the dignity of man. A Power without limits can never be a ministry nor a service, and political Power, under the empire of Christian civilization, is no other

¹⁸³ Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, 318; The Crimean War (1853-1856), that occupied much of Donoso’s geopolitical thought, is commonly considered the first modern war. In it, the telegraph, steamboat, railway, and photography were deployed for the first time.

¹⁸⁴ Elsewhere, Donoso connected this conceit to the immanentist hubris of modernity, embodied by the socialists, “the rebel Proudhon,” and his Luciferian lineage. A more granular intellectual genealogy of modernity is found in Leo Strauss’ essay “The Three Waves of Modernity.” In Strauss’ interpretation, the expansion of statism and technique shared an arcane ideological ancestry. The project of the first wave, personified in Francis Bacon, was to control nature. The second wave, personified in Rousseau, continued the project, but redirected it from nature unto man himself.

¹⁸⁵ Ellul, *The Technological Society*.

¹⁸⁶ Donoso Cortés, *Carta al director de la ‘Revue des Deux Mondes,’*, 769.

thing. A power without limits is, on the other hand, an idolatry, in the subject as well as in the king: in the subject because he adores the king; in the king, because he adores himself.”¹⁸⁷

Following his philosophy of limits, Donoso was an avid critic of the very absolutism he is superficially associated with by liberal historiography. While the historical emergence of absolute monarchy had desirably “conserved the unity and perpetuity of Power”, it had also “suppressed or despised resistances and hierarchies, and with this the law of God was violated.”¹⁸⁸

The metaphysical law that Donoso referred to is that of unity and variety. The Triune essence of God is reflected in all things: “in society, unity is manifest by means of Power, and variety, by means of hierarchies; Power and hierarchies, as well as the unity and variety they represent, are inviolable and sacred things, as their coexistence is at the same time the fulfillment of the law of God and by fiat the freedom of the people.”¹⁸⁹ Absolute power was monolithic, recognizing neither authority nor hierarchies outside itself, and was therefore contrary to the normative power that the law of unity and variety commanded.

In practice, the march of absolutism and the subsequent rise of voluntarist technological statism were levelling the rich tapestry of hierarchies in Donoso’s ideal political order.¹⁹⁰

By Donoso’s time, Montesquieu had already proposed a solution to the problem of the limitation of power. Famously, he had set out to divide and separate political power into three branches: executive, legislative and judicial. The doctrine was premised on setting the forces of the absolute state against itself. This was to be the surest guarantee of individual rights.

Donoso regarded the renowned formula *il faut que le pouvoir arrête le pouvoir* as being insufficient. In pitting the forces of the state against each other, Donoso

¹⁸⁷ Donoso Cortés, *Carta al director de la ‘Revue des Deux Mondes,’*, 769-770.

¹⁸⁸ Donoso Cortés, *Carta al director de la ‘Revue des Deux Mondes,’*, 769.

¹⁸⁹ Donoso Cortés, *Carta al director de la ‘Revue des Deux Mondes,’*, 769.

¹⁹⁰ The advent of absolutism coincided with the “restoration of literary paganism and religious insurrection,” thus placing absolutism outside the Catholic tradition. Donoso Cortés, *Carta al director de la ‘Revue des Deux Mondes,’*, 769; Quentin Skinner’s *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* examines the connection between the Reformation and absolutism authoritatively.

considered that Montesquieu had capitulated to the assumptions and aspirations of absolutism vis-à-vis the state, that treated the latter as the repository of undelegated and unquestionable sovereignty.¹⁹¹ The absolute state had substituted the unlimited powers of the absolute monarch and the absolute sovereignty of the people had substituted the unlimited powers of the prince.¹⁹² Thus, the state could not limit its expansion from *within* its own structure.¹⁹³

Not only had the doctrine of the separation of powers granted absolutism its assumptions and ambitions in theory, but it had also done so in practice. The division and equilibrium of powers it premised was de facto impossible. Donoso rejected it from an empirical standpoint as early as the *Lecciones*,

There are no mixed Governments nor have they ever existed. The supposition of their existence rests on a principle that is false; in the principle of the equilibrium of powers...there are no examples of [equilibrium] at any period in history...The proclaimers of mixed government have always confused the coexistence of two weak elements with the dominant element.¹⁹⁴

In Donoso's account, power was indivisible and concentrated at a single point in the body politic, irrespective of the concrete form of political power.¹⁹⁵ For Donoso, that point was the government, or the executive branch in the context of Montesquieu's model. Crucially, the locus of political decision-making had moved *within* the structure

¹⁹¹ According to Professor Galvão de Sousa, Montesquieu's juridico-political vision was already "compromised" by assuming centralist absolutism. Montesquieu had adopted an individualist anthropology, which led him to discard intermediate institutions. *Galvão de Sousa*, 115.

¹⁹² A note on sovereignty. Donoso did not refer to abstract sovereignty again after the *Lecciones*. Even there, the triple identity between sovereignty, intelligence—embodied in a concrete social class—and force, separated Donoso from abstract conceptions of sovereignty, starting with the doctrinaires themselves. Our intuition for the fading out of the concept of sovereignty in Donoso is that only God could fulfill the conditions of sovereignty: omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. Immanentizing sovereignty, as Donoso had, circumstantially, in the *Lecciones*, even if he had distinguished between absolute and relative forms of sovereignty, could only bring trouble. The heirs to Montesquieu's project fundamentally accepted the premises of an immanent and absolute sovereignty, and only after had tried to divide it. But once these premises had been accepted, the project of limitation from within was helpless. After the *Lecciones*, Donoso became increasingly vigilant of the abstractions of what he called "philosophical civilization," that opposed to "Catholic Civilization," pursued knowledge independently of revelation. In Sevilla Andrés, Donoso's "two Civilizations" parallel Augustine's "two cities."

¹⁹³ Arguably, the legislative branch is never engulfed by the state, as it remains open to the inputs of civil society through elected representatives.

¹⁹⁴ Donoso Cortés, *Lecciones de Derecho Político*, 309-310.

¹⁹⁵ In the words of Wilhelmsen "The metaphysic of Power in Donoso is backed by a historical phenomenology that vanquishes any illusion regarding the effective limitation of power from within its structure." Wilhelmsen, "Donoso Cortés y el significado del poder político", 723.

of the modern state. As the state crowded out everything outside itself, its power had become almost impossible to limit. In sum, Donoso believed that what had started as a positive description of the English system by Montesquieu had taken on normative force among continental theorists. In doing so, the new formulation of checks and balances conceded to absolutism its pretensions in theory and was an ineffective brake on power in practice.

In the past, forms of political power had been resisted from *without*. According to the Brazilian jurist Galvão de Sousa, the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas exemplified a tradition of limited monarchy in Western Europe that “tempered” royal power by opposing it with aristocratic elements (feudalism and the privileges of nobility, clergy, university) as well as democratic elements (local and communal liberties, militia, and the privileges of corporations), all of which were felt in the *Cortes* or estates general.¹⁹⁶ Donoso, who appears to work within this tradition, thought that this configuration of political power was a more authentic form of mixed constitution or regime.¹⁹⁷ He stressed the historical discontinuity between traditional “hierarchically organized material resistances” to power, namely, the *Cortes* or assemblies, and the liberal parliamentarism that replaced these earlier institutions in the XIX century. Parliamentarism had made the assembly the absolute font of sovereignty. This, to Donoso, was inadmissible, for the source of all authority could only be God. “Assemblies in those times,” says Donoso, referring to the traditional *Cortes*, “were never a power.”¹⁹⁸ Rather, they were a true resistance.

Absolute monarchy had constituted a “negation of Christian monarchy in *one* fundamental condition,” insofar as it levelled divine variety as reflected in hierarchies.¹⁹⁹ Parliamentarism was a “fatal reaction” to absolute monarchy. It negated Christian monarchy, not in one but “in essence and *all* its conditions,”

¹⁹⁶ Galvão de Sousa, *Política e teoría do estado*, 113.

¹⁹⁷ Donoso Cortés, *Carta al director de la 'Revue des Deux Mondes,'* 769. Donoso idealized hereditary monarchy, as it existed in the confines that separated feudal and absolute monarchy, as the “most perfect and final form of political power and social hierarchies.” And yet what set him apart from the reactionaries of his time is that he did not promulgate nor think that monarchical reinstatement was possible. This is the tragic mark of all of Donoso’s output.

¹⁹⁸ Donoso Cortés, *Carta al director de la 'Revue des Deux Mondes,'* 769. Donoso launches a frontal attack on Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s social-contractarianism.

¹⁹⁹ Donoso Cortés, *Carta al director de la 'Revue des Deux Mondes,'* 770.

[parliamentarism] negates it in its *unity*, because it converts into three what is one with the division of Powers; it negates it in its *perpetuity*, because it places its foundation in a contract, and no power is inadmissible if its foundation is variable; it negates it in its *limitation*, because the political trinity in which power resides, either does not act out of impotence, organic disease brought to it by division, or acts tyrannically, not recognizing outside of itself nor finding around itself any legitimate resistances. Finally, parliamentarism, that negates Christian monarchy in all the conditions of its unity, negates it also in its *variety* and all its conditions through the suppression of social hierarchies.²⁰⁰

In an apparent paradox, what results from division of powers is a power that is at once potentially “impotent” and “tyrannical.” But it is very well possible that authority might be weakened while the state is strengthened to tyrannical proportions, insofar as every hierarchy outside the state that is animated by the principle of authority is trammled. Donoso’s reasoning here is not far from the Soft Despotism described by Alexis de Tocqueville, to whom he is often compared.

The path from atomization and homogenization, to liberal anarchy, and finally on to centralizing socialism is a gateway in Donoso. Similarly, Schmitt’s insight in *Legality and Legitimacy* was that “a pluralist party state becomes ‘total’ out of weakness, not out of strength and power. The state intervenes in every area of life, because it must fulfill the claims of all interested parties.”²⁰¹

Of the four characteristics of power negated by parliamentarism (unity, variety, perpetuity and limitation), it is “limitation” that concerned Donoso the most, given the growth of power at the time. The emergence of the high-modernist state as a political category compounded the philosophical, political, and technical problem of its limitation.

Faced with this challenge concerning limitation, we ought to distinguish between the dynamics of political power, and statism as a historical form of the political.²⁰² Conceptually, the modern nation-state as we know it only began to appear later in Donoso, often as part of his ominous predictions about centralization, ideology, and technology. Instead, government and monarchy feature prominently throughout his

²⁰⁰ Donoso Cortés, *Carta al director de la ‘Revue des Deux Mondes,’* 770.

²⁰¹ Schmitt, *Legality and Legitimacy*, 92.

²⁰² On this matter see, for example, Negro Pavón, *Gobierno y estado*.

work. That is because the Spanish state emerged before his eyes during the later years of his life, during the *Decada Moderada*.²⁰³

This is the incipient power that Donoso felt was irresistible. Donoso's historical vantage point allowed him to catch a glimpse of where Europe was heading. The social and technological conditions unfolding in 1848 exhausted Montesquieu's project. Liberal parliamentarism, that had arisen through the Enlightenment as the modern backstop to counterbalance absolute monarchy, could not arrest the historical course of the voluntarist state.²⁰⁴

Gallego García contends that, by the second and third decades of the twentieth century, "demagogic movements, in their voluntarist drift, began to sever the last walls that limited the power of human will."²⁰⁵ Thus Wilfredo Pareto wondered "who still worries for the balance of powers? For the just equilibrium between the rights of the state and those of the individual?" In turn, Carl Schmitt identified the division of powers as "the strongest contradiction between liberalism and democracy."²⁰⁶ For Schmitt, denying that state power could concentrate in a single point contradicted the very definition of democracy as the identity between government and the governed.²⁰⁷

The Limits of Tradition

The political task at hand for Donoso was not only to limit the power of the rising technological leviathan, but to propose an attractive vision that could compete with the materialism and novelty of the utopian panaceas of the socialists. Graham captures Donoso's aversion to a statecraft dominated by the new political economy,

With his Southwestern rural origins and professional career, Donoso was ill prepared to understand or sympathize with an industrial revolution for the Northeast [Catalonia], but he did not really oppose it in itself. What worried him was the intense public response to this economic revolution, such as he observed in the great London Exhibition of 1851. He pleaded for a 'balance between

²⁰³ The modern nation-state was a work in progress in XIX century Spain. Before that, the political unit was the amalgam of the Spanish Monarchy. The rationalizing and centralizing dynamic of the modern state explains much of the Carlist Wars.

²⁰⁴ In contrast we may consider the thought of contemporary democratic theorists such as Antonio García-Trevijano. For García-Trevijano, in a healthy liberal democracy, the legislative branch—representative of the people—remained outside the structure of the state and controlled it.

²⁰⁵ Gallego García, *Estado de Disolución*, 39.

²⁰⁶ Gallego García, *Estado de Disolución*, 39.

²⁰⁷ Gallego García, *Estado de Disolución*, 39.

material interests and those which are moral and religious.’ It was not railways or industry he opposed but the spirit of materialism so evident in the avid pursuit of these things.²⁰⁸

But the mismatch between Donoso’s vision of energetic but limited government and the “economic” century, to use Schmitt’s terminology, ran even deeper.²⁰⁹ According to Donoso’s own understanding of politics, defensive statecraft could not—and should not—attempt to recreate or offer substitutes for the moral, spiritual, and intellectual pre-political substrate of Christendom. The task of government, we have seen, was to resist by shoring up historically rooted, concrete political institutions.

Donoso’s prejudice is consistent with the timeless conservative attitude that while a rich civil society grows slowly from the ground up, it can easily be destroyed from the top down,

...the absolute impotence that all equilibrist parties are condemned to in History, and...the great problem of conciliation between of the rights of the State with respect to the individuals and of order with liberty is still a problem...man cannot maintain the equilibrium of things if not by abstaining from laying his hands on them...the only peoples that have at once been respectful and free, the only government that have been commensurate and strong, are those in which the hand of man is not seen in which the institutions have been forming with that slow and progressive vegetation with which everything that is stable in the domains of time and History grows²¹⁰

The most important of those para-political institutions was the Church. Like Tocqueville, Donoso believed that freedom was an emergent property of religion. True religion was sustained and actualized across society by the Church. So long as the Church’s precepts are followed, “interior repression,” or government of the self, would make freedom possible.²¹¹ This is the essence of what has been called Donoso’s law of the thermometer,

²⁰⁸ Graham, *Donoso Cortés: Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist*, 226.

²⁰⁹ It was not for a lack of exposure or understanding to the problems of political economy of the age. In fact, during his diplomatic mission to Prussia, Donoso dispatched on the *Zollverein* or German Customs Union in great detail. Some of these communications are compiled by Valverde in Donoso Cortés, *Despachos desde Berlín (1849)*, 347-449.

²¹⁰ Donoso Cortés, *Ensayo sobre el catolicismo, el liberalismo y el socialismo*, 639; The French Hispanist Charles de Mazade identified parallels to Edmund Burke in this passage. Suárez, *Vida y Obra de Juan Donoso Cortés*, 759.

²¹¹ Evidently, freedom as understood by Donoso had little to do with the unabridged exercise of our will stopping short of the rights of others.

Gentlemen, there are no more than two repressions possible: one interior and another exterior, religious and political. Their nature is such that, when the religious thermometer is up, the thermometer of repression is down, and when the religious thermometer is down, the political thermometer, political repression, tyranny, is up. This is a law of humanity, a law of History.²¹²

Although Donoso desired the self-regulation of the social organism through religious renovation, the preservation of society's integrity had come to the point of requiring strong defensive action by the government. But with the emergence of the state, by way of technological expansion, government action was turned into statist repression. Thus, Donoso felt trapped in the statist paradigm.

Kennedy also hinted at the inadequacy of Donoso's statecraft in response to the new forces at play in society,

If there is any single concept that dominates the career of Donoso as servant of the state, it is certainly the idea of Power. His basic concern is with the function of Power in society. With a unique single-mindedness he concentrates all his interest in this factor which he regards as the sine qua non of society. He saw society, as he understood and valued it, threatened, and he saw the threat—whether from absolutist followers of Don Carlos or liberal followers of Espartero—as being chiefly directed against power. All his intellectual and moral resources are consequently marshalled to repel the attack. His weakness is that the marshalling and of resources led him to neglect the importance of other factors in society—he never denied that there were others, but they never seriously engaged his attention.²¹³

In Kennedy's analysis, one must substitute "power" for the principle of authority (insofar as we have distinguished the two throughout our study). Authority was the true axis around which Donoso's life of statecraft revolved. We should also consider Donoso's early death. If only Providence had granted him more time, Donoso may taken on the new economic, material, and technological forces in society and channeled them towards the canons of tradition, just as Christian Democracy set out to do shortly after his time.

The Originality of Donoso

Donoso was never ingenuous enough to think that pre-revolutionary history could be reinstated by decree. This would have made Donoso, *mutatis mutandis*, a

²¹² Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, 316.

²¹³ Kennedy, "Donoso Cortés as Servant of the State," 554.

revolutionary per Huntington, a Pelagian per Oakeshott, and an immanentist per Augustine.

He was aware that the material and ideological conditions had changed radically and definitively. This is the insight that made Donoso a conservative pioneer in the eyes of Schmitt. Donoso surpasses de Maistre, to the extent that he “abandons legitimist argumentation and no longer formulates a political philosophy of Restoration, but a theory of dictatorship.”²¹⁴

We have already criticized Schmitt’s interpretation of Donosian dictatorship as being charged with political motivations. When Graham stated that, “[Donoso’s] two great speeches have survived misuse by exploiters of fascist mentality in the 1920s and 1930s to become world classics of oratory,” he certainly had Schmitt in mind.²¹⁵ Notwithstanding, Schmitt was absolutely correct in raising the fact that Donoso was not a monarchical *legitimist*. He loyally served the Isabeline monarchy until his death, regarding it as the best actually existing political alternative, a vestige of the principle of authority, a lesser-evil, or all three. But all the while, Donoso foresaw that the throne no longer counted “*El rey existe, el rey reina; pero no gobierna.*”²¹⁶ Thus, Donoso’s unique insight and projection into the future set him apart from the legitimist reactionaries.

Donoso’s acute sense of political reality did not make space for nostalgia. In the words of Pastor Martínez,

The American historian Peter Viereck...highlights the conservative originality, ability and subtlety of Donoso, but errs in considering him an eighty-eighter like [de Maistre and Bonald], that is, that he yearns and will look to return to the year before the Revolution in France. On the contrary, his theory of the counterrevolution is modern, bourgeois—not restorative of the Ancien Régime—which also differentiates him from Carlism in Spain.²¹⁷

Turning to the Carlist question again, *Carlismo* was a propertarian, agrarian and regional cause. It was essentially particularistic. Europe in 1848, however, was in a universalist iteration of the law of unity and variety. Accounts of the so-called “Spring

²¹⁴ Díez del Corral, *El liberalismo doctrinario*, 528.

²¹⁵ Graham, *Donoso Cortés: Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist*, 143.

²¹⁶ Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre Europa*, 459.

²¹⁷ Pastor Martínez, “Juan Donoso Cortés y la teoría de la dictadura.”

of Nations” tend to focus on the exaltation of national particularities and folklore, and ignore the underlying forces of centralization that were at work. From this point of view, the nation-state was fundamentally the level of politics at which centralization was taking place. Thus, we can imagine Donoso thinking that particularistic *Carlismo*, regardless of his personal inclinations, would soon be diluted into the political whole by the metaphysical force of the law of unity and diversity.

Furthermore, as the title of Schmitt’s book suggests, Donoso would remain a thinker oriented to Europe. Certainly, this had not (and is not) always the case for Iberian conservatives, including Carlist traditionalists, who often identify Europe with the corrupting currents of Reformation and Revolution. Donoso had traveled and conducted state affairs extensively in the European centers of power of his time. Hence, he readily anticipated that mass urban and industrial society constituted a new paradigm.²¹⁸

Donoso’s renown *Discurso de la dictadura*, in which he offered a defense of limited dictatorship in the short run, cloaks a sense of futility amidst the vastness of the forces unleashed throughout Europe. Donoso’s characteristic embrace of a somber future make him original and prophetic at once.

Reclaiming Cincinnatus

In the 1849 *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, Donoso bolstered the rule of Ramón María Narváez, leader of the *moderados*, and head of the Spanish government since 1847. General Narváez had repressed incipient revolts in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and Seville. He had drawn upon the plenary powers previously granted to him by parliament to keep the peace. Donoso’s speech is a response to Manuel Cortina, the leader of the progressive opposition, who had strongly criticized Narváez’s actions.²¹⁹

We must recall the broader European context of the *Discurso*, including the uprising that forced Pius IX to flee Rome to the coastal town of Gaeta. “What has that

²¹⁸ “The cult of material interests, the gigantic development of industry, the daring flight of commerce and the discredit that abstract speculations have fallen under in Europe, are things that had to produce and have produced the decadence of political influence and the preponderance of mercantile interests.” Donoso Cortés, *Despachos desde Berlín (1849)*, 421.

²¹⁹ Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, 305.

city where heroes, Caesars and Pontiffs have reigned done? It has exchanged the throne of the Pontiffs for that of the demagogues,” declared Donoso in the *Discurso*.²²⁰

In 1849, French troops arrived to aid the papacy under the banner of Catholic restoration (and the auspices of Napoleon’s realpolitik). Soon, they found themselves bombarding the Eternal City. The American chargé d’affaires in Rome wrote,

The contest is no longer between one army and another...but it is a struggle that embraces a whole moral world of ideas, hopes and faith, that may have an echo in the most distant generations. The actual object of the intervention is shaking the edifice of the Catholic religion to its very foundations, crushing that faith in thousands of hearts.²²¹

Thus, while Donoso’s speech dealt with Narvaéz’s rule most directly, Donoso was on the whole oriented to Rome. Rome’s was the most crucial in the wave of revolts across the continent, insofar as it activated Donoso’s universal political objective of preserving the freedom of the Roman Church. The circumstances under which Donoso supported Narvaéz’s use of plenary powers were, therefore, both particular and civilizational.²²²

In the *Discurso*, Donoso presented a dichotomous choice to parliament between one of two dictatorships,

The issue is to choose between the dictatorship that comes from below, and the dictatorship that comes from above: to choose the one that comes from above, because it come from cleaner and more serene regions; the issue is to choose, finally, between the dictatorship of the dagger or the dictatorship of the sabre: I choose the dictatorship of the sabre, because it is more noble.²²³

All the while, he lamented the deeply flawed terms, imposed by circumstance, under which was forced to act,

Gentlemen, if this were about a choice, a choice between liberty...and dictatorship, there would be no dissent; because who, being able to embrace liberty, bends the knee to dictatorship? But this is not the question. Liberty does not exist in Europe as a fact; the constitutional governments that represented it years back, are in most places not but a frame, a lifeless skeleton. Remember one thing, remember Imperial Rome. In Imperial Rome there exist all the Republican institutions: there exist the omnipotent dictators, the inviolable tribunes, there

²²⁰ Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, 320.

²²¹ Kertzer, *The Pope Who Would be King*, loc. 236.

²²² It was truly a moment of European dimension and repercussion. As Graham notes, Metternich, Nicholas I, Pius IX, Louis Napoleon and even Montalembert, a liberal Catholic, took in the *Discurso*. Donoso’s concerns about the upheavals faced by Narvaéz were at once the concerns of virtually every European cabinet. Graham, *Donoso Cortés: Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist*, 150.

²²³ Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, 323.

exist the senatorial families, there exist the eminent consuls...there is only one thing missing: there is excess of one man and the Republic is missing.²²⁴

The terms in which Donoso set out the question are certainly arguable. Was the *via media*—the path that Donoso had so fruitfully followed to inaugurate the *Decada Moderada*—truly exhausted? Possibly. However, Donoso's dictatorial option was inherently limited.

If we have adequately conveyed the basis of Donoso's statecraft so far, then it should be plain to see that dictatorship was not an ideal form of government for him, nor was any other form of government for that matter. Throughout Donoso's work, political form is subordinate to political content. Thus, Donoso's support was radically contingent upon the situation and the revolutionary challenge at hand in Europe and Spain.²²⁵ The exceptional powers granted to Narvaéz by parliament continued to be subject to circumstances and were limited by a temporal horizon.

But Dictatorship was limited in a much more obvious sense, namely, in its capacity to bend the long arch of history. Ironically, to see in dictatorship or in any other institutional arrangement a permanent remedy to the ills of Europe, would be to follow the liberal school in their error. According to Donoso,

when liberalism explains evil and good, order and disorder, by the different forms of government, all ephemeral and transitory; when, disregarding...all social problems, and all religious problems...it sets out to discuss political problems, as if they were the only ones worthy by their highness to occupy the Statesman...there are no words to describe...the profound incapacity and radical impotency of this school, not to resolve, but even to pose these dreadful questions. The liberal school...has ventured to govern without the people and God; an extravagant and impossible enterprise: its days are counted, because God is showing up by one point of the horizon, and the people by the other²²⁶

For Donoso, Europe's problem was primarily located in the soul, and not in particular institutional arrangements. He pressed that Europe's moral substrate, of which political liberty was an emergent property, had tragically dried-up. Only its lifeless institutional carcass remained. The liberals' obsession with proceduralism tended to disregard the underlying state of civilization, of which political reality could only be a reflection. One

²²⁴ Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, 322.

²²⁵ Indeed, Donoso voted down Narvaéz's cabinet a year later.

²²⁶ Donoso Cortés, *Ensayo sobre el catolicismo, el liberalismo y el socialismo*, 599.

thing alone could truly avert catastrophe: a religious reaction that Donoso nevertheless did not expect.²²⁷ Hence, there is an overwhelming pathos throughout the *Discurso*, arising from the realization that dictatorship left the deeper issues of social disintegration unaddressed.

Graham has correctly captured both the necessary temporality of Donoso's support for exceptional powers, and the need for moral reform in the long run,

In front of a nominally liberal Cortes, Donoso defied the principles of the Progressives and offered a reasoned defense of the legitimacy of dictatorship as a temporary safeguard for society against revolution. But besides upholding political reaction, he called for a general moral and religious reaction as the only permanent remedy against the disorder of revolutions and the tyranny of dictatorships.²²⁸

Temporarily, however, following Graham's reading, Donoso considered that "to stave off revolutions, governmental resistance was more effective than additional liberal concessions; Louis Philippe had fallen by not resisting, and Pius IX by granting concessions."²²⁹ Thus, Donoso lent his support to Narváez with these precedents in mind.

The historical sources and jurisprudence from which Donoso sought inspiration for the *Discurso* respond to limited conceptions of dictatorship. Donoso found "constitutional" precedents in Athens, Rome, and the neighboring France at the time of the *Discurso*. As Imatz points out, Donoso was not a theorist of dictatorship in the abstract. He was not a Lenin but a statesman in search of practical precedents of strong-man rule. Imatz points out that Donoso found the best example in the commissary or delegated dictatorship of the Roman patrician Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus.²³⁰

Dictatorship in Donoso's policy playbook, inspired by the Roman institution, was less a theory than a "rational" and "legitimate" tool of government. If in the *Lecciones* government was "always and everywhere resisting," in the *Discurso*, Cincinnatian dictatorship was the mode of resistance in times of emergency under great stress. Dictatorship remained within the immediate sphere of political praxis, rather than

²²⁷ Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, 320.

²²⁸ Graham, *Donoso Cortés: Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist*, 146.

²²⁹ Graham, *Donoso Cortés: Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist*, 148.

²³⁰ Donoso Cortés, *Contra el liberalismo*, 47-48.

in the most abstract regions of political philosophy that deal with questions of the legitimacy of political power.

Crucially, and here we are getting at Schmitt's misrepresentation, dictatorship was never a legitimating force in itself, *ex nihilo*. Schmitt considered Donoso a pioneer insofar as he was the first conservative to recognize the impending abolition, *de facto*, of the monarchy, and to consequently abandon the illusion of monarchical restoration as a political strategy. Like Donoso, Schmitt was no legitimist. But Schmitt went a step further, and posited that sovereign dictatorship was the only effective counterrevolutionary approach. He found intellectual armament in Donoso, who he made into a proto-decisionist.

In the *Discurso*, there is an analogy between a miracle as an exceptional phenomenon in the natural order and dictatorship as an exceptional situation in the state.²³¹ The suspension of the law was equivalent to the miraculous suspension of natural laws. But Schmitt identified the miracle not with dictatorship but with the "rupture of juridical continuity."²³² Theoretically, Schmitt interpreted this as a window of opportunity. With the law suspended, a non-normative, sovereign dictatorship could be actualized. The state is thus reduced to an act of the will: a pure decision. Hence, Schmitt's famous dictum that the "sovereign is he who decides on the exception."²³³ Schmitt was all too eager to detect in Donoso traces of this "pure decision, that does not reason, nor discuss, nor justify itself, that is to say, created from nothing and absolute."²³⁴ "[Donoso's] decisionism is essentially dictatorship, not legitimacy."²³⁵

Erudite legal minds have devoted themselves to disentangling Donoso from Schmitt's unorthodox reading.²³⁶ We do insist, however, on the importance of incorporating Donoso's vocational crisis to any discussion of the *Discurso*. Donoso's crisis comes across clearly in the series of private epistles we have collected in this study. Not least, in the unfinished manuscript that we have opened our investigation

²³¹ Mayorga, *El Estado de excepción como milagro: de Donoso a Benjamin*, 283; Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, 309.

²³² Mayorga, *El Estado de excepción como milagro: de Donoso a Benjamin*, 290.

²³³ Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 5.

²³⁴ Mayorga, *El Estado de excepción como milagro: de Donoso a Benjamin*, 291-292.

²³⁵ Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 66.

²³⁶ Lopez-Amo's prologue to Schmitt's *Interpretación Europea de Donoso Cortés* is canonical.

with. Valverde dated it in 1850: the year after the *Discurso*. Its pages do not reveal a convinced decisionist, but of a Catholic and a statesman in doubt. The crucial context these epistles provide command explanatory power, also for the more theoretical debates on Donosian dictatorship.

Aside from this, we are convinced, contra Schmitt, that Donoso never denigrated the importance of legitimacy in politics. In his case, that meant a specifically Christian idea of legitimacy: the existence of a higher ideal of absolute justice from which legitimacy was derived. This ideal existed beyond a transcendent limit to worldly politics that was lost to Schmitt. For Donoso, the *source* of Narvaéz's government was legitimate. As were its *actions*. Both dimensions of government were legitimate insofar as they were conducive to the conservation of society. And this conservation was the normative requirement of authority that could ultimately be traced up the God beyond the transcendent limit.

Thus, Donoso's *Discurso* remained at all times within the philosophical limits he subjected his own statecraft to. His account of limits contrasts with the internal logic of an autonomous power born out of the will that fascinated Schmitt for its counterrevolutionary potential.

Whom to serve

To contain revolution, Donoso had to rely circumstantially on the repressive force of a rapidly metastasizing state. At the same time, he was aware that these forces would sustain tyranny in the near future.²³⁷ That was Donoso's quandary. His internal struggle reached a high point in this memorable segment of the *Discurso*:

When legality suffices to save society, [we shall uphold] legality; when it is not enough, dictatorship. Gentlemen, this tremendous word (it is indeed tremendous, but not as much as the word revolution, the most tremendous of all); I say that this tremendous word has been pronounced here today by a man known to all; this man is not made from the cloth of dictators. I was born to comprehend them,

²³⁷ "The foundation, gentlemen, of all of your errors (addressing the benches on the left) consists of not knowing what the direction of civilization and the world is. You think that civilization and the world are on their way out, when civilization and the world are on the way back. The world, gentlemen, walks in gigantic steps to the most gigantic and desolating despotism of which there is memory among men...To announce these things I need not be a prophet. It suffices to consider the dreadful set of human events from their only true point of view: from Catholic heights." Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, 316.

I was not born to imitate them. Two things are for me impossible: to condemn dictatorship and to exercise it. That is why I am incapacitated to govern; I cannot accept government in good conscience; I could not accept it without placing half of myself against the other half, without placing my instinct and my rationality at war.²³⁸

Donoso was acutely aware of his sustained involvement with a government that was transforming into a political machine. In spite of this, Traditionalist critics of Donoso, themselves anti-statist, are generally not sensitive to his concerns about the growth of the state. Miguel Ayuso is keen to point out the effects Donoso's rural but bourgeois extraction, liberal training, and Francophilia had on his outlook. Ayuso further suggests that Donoso could not understand Spain's "genuine" non-statist tradition. For Ayuso, this can only mean embracing Carlism's authentic reaction against the Bourbons' centralizing designs.²³⁹ For Bartyzel, had Donoso lived longer, he would have coherently arrived at Carlist positions.²⁴⁰

But if we turn to Donoso's statecraft, it is not clear whether Donoso is aligned with the state or with the principle of authority. His explicit suspicion of the build-up of state capacity around 1848, as well as the prospect of a socialist conquest of the state, point to the latter. Reflecting on the *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, Valverde argued that for Donoso, what legitimized dictatorship in exceptional circumstances was the absolute value of *society*.²⁴¹ It was never the state, which was far from an absolute value to Donoso.

Authority, government, and society are antecedent to and exist independently of the state in its modern configuration.²⁴² All three bear the divine imprint, while the state,

²³⁸ Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, 307; Alluding to Donoso's renunciation of power, Schmitt says "That philosopher of a radical dictatorship has said of himself that he wouldn't have the hardness necessary to be a dictator; this testimony does not speak against, but in favor of his theory, for it shows that his ideas of struggle and decision were the fruit of meditation over political questions and situation, and not of the particular evil of a misanthropic spirit. In his personal character, Donoso bears a liberal trait, in the best meaning of this term; he even shows himself better and more essentially liberal than his moralizing humanitarian adversaries. The proper plain that corresponds to liberal qualities is the sphere of the individual and the personal, not that of political ideas or those of the state." Schmitt, *Interpretación Europea de Donoso Cortés*, 142-143.

²³⁹ Ayuso, "Actualidad y vigencia de Donoso Cortés," 104.

²⁴⁰ Bartyzel, "Tres encarnaciones de Donoso Cortés: constitucionalista—decisionista—providencialista."

²⁴¹ Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, 306.

²⁴² See for example Negro Pavón, *Gobierno y Estado*.

when taken to be a human creation, does not. Dictatorship could be promoted, exceptionally, in relation to the principle of authority. In doing so, Donoso understood himself as serving society (by upholding authority through government action), and not the abstract idol of the state. The *Discurso* aimed to invest the government with commissarial dictatorial powers, not to legitimize the state. Considering this, the supposed contradiction between Donoso's call for a delegated dictatorship, and his warning against the emergence of a technological leviathan, is resolved. In this regard, we can take the vast distribution and positive reception of the speech as a marker of its coherence. The distinction between the modern state and timeless principles of government thus appears to hold.

In relation to this distinction, Gallego García's exposition of Westemeyer's *Donoso Cortés, hombre de estado y teólogo* is particularly interesting,

Reflecting on Donoso's rejection of the modern State, the [Westemeyer] even considers whether the Donosian political ideal is a society without State and government. If the State, for Donoso, is in effect the result of religious repulse, wouldn't his ideal consist of a complete absence of it?...Westemeyer incurs, however, in the error of confusing State and Government, which Donoso did not. For [Donoso], government was as good and necessary as harmful and superfluous was the State. Government is a natural fact, the State is not. And it is this artificiality of the State, as the rationalist construct it is, what the thinker from Extremadura rejects in maturity.²⁴³

Gallego García's distinction between state and government further attenuates the tension generated by the political participation of Christians, which lay at the core of

²⁴³ Gallego García, *Estado de Disolución*, 65; We may at this point resort again to Michael Oakeshott. On the issue of whether the political skepticism implies anarchism, Oakeshott said "The sceptical style of government is not anarchical: the extreme here is not 'no-government,' or even government reduced to the smallest dimensions. [The politics of faith] reveals itself as maximum government, the total ordering of the activities of the subject, and from this point of view, scepticism may be said to represent minimum government: it is concerned to impose the least possible uniformity upon the direction of activity. But the character of the sceptical style is not merely what it is when reflected in the mirror of faith. It has a positive office, the maintenance of a relevant public order in a community; and it can rise above minimum government, and be imperial in its own province, without approximating itself to rule in the manner of faith. Consequently the nemesis here is not the absence of government, nor is it an inclination towards weak government. Indeed, in its characteristic sphere of activity, and on account of the narrowness of that sphere, government in the sceptical style is able to be strong just where the government of faith is liable to be weak...In short, this style of government can be strong because it does not need to be overwhelming in order to be strong: it is paramount because its activities are limited." Oakeshott, *The Politics of Faith and the Politics of Scepticism*, 106. According to Oakeshott's interpretation, Donoso's energetic but limited understanding of statecraft is not only non-contradictory, but perfectly plausible.

Donoso's crisis. The distinction is also pertinent to our discussion of Kennedy's "inconsistency" thesis, for Kennedy assumed the category of "state" anachronistically (it suffices to recall the title of his essay "Donoso Cortés as Servant of the State"), and projected it backwards, distorting Donoso's rationale for statecraft.

IV. The Statecraft of Hopeful Pessimism

During his final months, Donoso decided to remain in at his post as ambassador in Paris. He did so with serious reservations concerning the morality of Christian participation in government. Donoso even considered retiring into a religious life of contemplation.

We have alluded to Donoso's letter to the Prussian diplomat Raczynski, in which Donoso explained that only he possessed the knowledge to continue the negotiations with the Americans and the French over Cuba. We can examine this decision from a short-term perspective. Thus, diligently accompanying the diplomatic talks to their conclusion was expedient and politically convenient. But we can also understand Donoso's decision as a choice that is consonant with his rationale for statecraft. Specifically, the lower limit compelling him to uphold the governmental responsibilities he had assumed.

From this perspective, Donoso's decision reflects a lifelong process of discernment. The result of his practical reasoning was a positive answer to the problem of Christian participation in politics. As mentioned in our discussions of Machiavelli and Schmitt, Donoso refused to accumulate political power, at least if we take his *Discurso sobre la dictadura* at face value. In a sense, these two points of inflection—the renunciation of power in the *Discurso* and his decision to remain in Paris—are representative of Donoso's upper and lower limits of statecraft. Within these limits, between otherworldliness and affirmation, and between resignation and ambition, laid a delicate equilibrium that Christian statesmen must navigate.

Fortunately for us, the peaks of Donoso's ambivalence, characterized by crisis, doubt, and contradiction, were succeeded by troughs in which he articulated a robust vision of Christian statecraft. In these more confident moments, Donoso penned his thoughts on the virtues that sustain statecraft. He often made them explicit in lesser-known and rarely translated private correspondence. In the revolutionary moment, Donoso asserted the value of government service and duty. Ultimately, he was guided by the virtue of transcendental hope.

Freedom

The dismal world unfolding around him never paralyzed a hopeful Donoso. He vindicated agency. Hope drew its infinite reserves from the potentiality of human freedom to reach for the good. In the *Ensayo*, he dedicated a chapter to “the free will of man,” in which he spoke of it as “the masterpiece of creation, and the most portentous, if it were licit to speak this way, of the divine portents. To it all things are invariably ordered, in such a manner in which creation would be inexplicable without man, and man would be inexplicable not being free.”²⁴⁴ Before that, in his articles on Pius IX, Donoso had noted that “the idea of freedom is founded on that of free will, and free will is not a discovery of philosophy; it is a fact revealed by God to the human race.”²⁴⁵

Freedom is one of the two constitutive elements of Donoso’s theology of history. “Outside God’s action, there is nothing but the action of man, outside of divine providence, there is nothing but human freedom. The combination of this liberty with that providence constitutes the varied and rich plot of History,” asserted Donoso.²⁴⁶ Together, human freedom and Providence unfold within Donoso’s particular cosmology. For Donoso “Creation is like a circle; God is, from one point of view, its circumference; from another point of view; its center; as its center, it attracts it; as circumference, it contains it, everything obeys this irresistible attraction.”²⁴⁷ The freedom of intelligent beings consists of oscillations within these vast providential limits that are both God. Throughout, Donoso’s theology echoes Augustine, who Donoso called “the most beautiful genius and the greatest of doctors,” and who had said “*Poor mortal, do you wish to flee from God? Throw yourself in His arms.*”²⁴⁸

Donoso’s most abstract and remote metaphysical doctrines had real ethical and political implications. For Donoso, neutrality, indifference, or inaction in face of the Social Question was impossible, metaphysically impossible even:

And do not tell me that you do not wish to combat; because in the instance in which you tell me, you are combating, nor that you ignore which side to incline towards, because in the very moment that you say that, you have inclined to a

²⁴⁴ Donoso Cortés, *Ensayo sobre el catolicismo, el liberalismo y el socialismo*, 548.

²⁴⁵ Donoso Cortés, *Pío IX*, 199.

²⁴⁶ Donoso Cortés, *Ensayo sobre el catolicismo, el liberalismo y el socialismo*, 548.

²⁴⁷ Donoso Cortés, *Ensayo sobre el catolicismo, el liberalismo y el socialismo*, 587.

²⁴⁸ Donoso Cortés, *Ensayo sobre el catolicismo, el liberalismo y el socialismo*, 588.

side, nor affirm to me that you wish to be neutral, because when you think yourself so, you are no longer so; nor assure me that you will remain indifferent, because I will mock you, by pronouncing that word, you have already picked a party. Do not tire in seeking secure asylum against the scourge of war, because you tire vainly; that war stretches as much as space, and is prolonged as much as time. Only in eternity, fatherland of the just, can you find rest; there alone there is no combat; do not presume, however, that the doors of Eternity will be open to you unless you show the scars you carry; those gates do not open but for those who gloriously combated here the combats of the Lord, and those who go like the Lord, crucified”²⁴⁹

There was a bias towards action in Donoso, to the point that truth and action seemed to converge. He railed against the neutralizing, paralyzing, and limitless discourse of what he called “philosophical civilization” and the “discussing class” whose home was late bourgeois liberal parliamentarism.²⁵⁰

Thus, Donoso, despite his notoriously dire predictions, steered clear from crude historicism, as well as from a metaphysical fatalism that was essentially alien to the Christian faith. Complete resignation and indifference were contrary to Christian teaching. Freedom, in conjunction with Providence, made possible both the right theorization and the practice of a Christian statecraft.

In an 1851 letter to Guizot, following the Latin maxim *actiones secundum fidei*, Donoso asserted that,

the world shall not be saved by thought alone, but also through action, given that man only thinks to act later conforming to his thought. In order to be saved, the world needs truth and virtue. Now, the one and the other can only be obtained through the Church, here’s why: in the order of thought, only the Church is in possession of the absolute, in the order of action, only she is in possession of charity.²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ Donoso Cortés, *Ensayo sobre el catolicismo, el liberalismo y el socialismo*, 563.

²⁵⁰ According to Valverde, Donoso “rails against ‘parliamentarism’ and not against Parliament conceived as an aid or resistance to Power; and against the spirit of discussion, a ‘universal dissolvent’ that necessarily cuts short the life of Power, because it is itself a Power. For Carl Schmitt, Donoso’s intuition of how discussion is at the heart of deist liberalism is ‘the most surprising judgement on continental liberalism.’ Eternal discussion, consequent indecision and the liberals’ lack of compromise exasperated Donoso, who saw in [continental liberalism] the seed of its self-destruction, because it was incapable of giving valid and definitive responses to the political and social questions.” Valverde, introduction to *Obras completas de Juan Donoso Cortés*, 124. For Donoso, socialism’s theological resolve was too vast to afford the paralyzing effects of discussion; Schmitt himself said that “Liberalism, with its contradictions and compromises, existed for Donoso Cortés only in that short interim period in which it was possible to answer the question ‘Christ or Barabbas?’ with a proposal to adjourn or appoint a commission of investigation.” Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 62.

²⁵¹ Donoso Cortés, *Carta a Guizot*, 705.

All the while, Donoso was aware of the steepness of the challenge before him. Writing as early as 1843, Donoso was aware of an epochal shift deeper than the political moment in Spain,

...I do not ignore that the present generation, fed by the breasts of revolution, affirms everything that I deny and denies everything that I affirm. I know that it admits and proclaims as beyond doubt the principle of the indefinite perfectibility of society and Man, when I take it that Humanity is identical to itself in all the prolongation of time; that since the beginning of things to until the consummation of centuries it is subject to the same laws, the same changes, the same growth and the same declination...I know that vapor, miracle of industry, does not suppress distance, or is the most powerful agent of business between peoples, but by extinguishing little by little patriotism in the nations; I know that that which we gain in culture we lose in innocence...I know that philosophy ends with faith, and that the principles that today govern society do not attain domination if not because their ascendant movement corresponds to the rapid and simultaneous declination of all moral principles...I know all of this and yet there is a voice within me that rises up and my spirit listens to, that brings me to take on the great enterprise of this pathetic history²⁵²

Disregarding societal trends to proclaim the unchanging truth was a “holy duty” for Donoso. He asserted that “even if the triumph of the ideas I proclaim is impossible in the current times”, it is “necessary to clear the path so that they may reach empire” in better days. “The triumph of error can be as long as disastrous, but it is never definitive or eternal. The light of truth can suffer from eclipses, and those who confess it may receive the crown of martyrdom or drag the chain of tribulation; but the truth, daughter of God, is queen of the world.”²⁵³

Donoso’s existential attitude is reflected further in a May 1849 letter to Charles de Montalembert. It appears right after the *Discurso sobre la dictadura* in Valverde’s *Obras Completas*, as part of a compilation of the correspondence that followed the momentous speech. In it, Donoso exclaims,

Don’t tell me that, if expiration is certain, the fight is excused; because in the first place, the fight can adjourn catastrophe, and in the second place, the fight is a duty and not speculation to those that pride ourselves as Catholics. Let us thank God for having granted us the combat, and let us ask not above the grace of

²⁵² Donoso Cortés, *Historia de la regencia de María Cristina*, 936.

²⁵³ Donoso Cortés, *Historia de la regencia de María Cristina*, 936.

combat for the grace of triumph to he who in his infinite goodness reserves to who combat well for his cause a reward greater than victory²⁵⁴

Reflecting on this letter, Sevilla Andrés concludes that,

being a providentialist, Donoso could not be absolutely desperate nor disillusioned with the possibilities of man. There is a certain optimism in the first writings of our author and a tremendous epochal disillusionment around 1848. The letter to Montalembert...in which the triumph of good over evil by the direct intervention of Providence is expected, does not, however, leave the care of the fight to [Providence] alone, but it calls man to a combat that he must feel as an obligation.²⁵⁵

Service

Donoso conceived statecraft in the spirit of service and obligation. Government was, quite literally, his ligature. In the following passage, Donoso imagines himself enmeshed in the hierarchical fabric of Creation, where the ligature of government is his “political bond,”

Philosophical civilization teaches that the nature of man is full and healthy: healthy and full in a radical way in its essence and its constitutive elements. Man’s understanding being healthy, he can see the truth, discover it and invent it; the will being healthy, he desires the good and does good naturally...it is clear that reason will get to know the truth, all of the truth, abandoned to itself, and that the will, abandoned to itself, will forcefully realize absolute good. This being so, it is clear that the solution to the great social problem lies with breaking all the ligatures that compress and hold human reason and the free will of man; evil is not in this free will or reason, but in those ligatures. If evil consists in having ligatures, and good in not having them, perfection will consist in not having any of any kind. If this is so, humanity will be perfect when it negates God, that is its divine ligature, and when it negates *Government, that is its political ligature*, and when it negates property, that is its social ligature, and when it negates family, which is its domestic ligature (emphasis added).²⁵⁶

Donoso had discerned and pursued his vocation of government service at a young age. Thereafter, this political ligature worked as the lower limit of statecraft, obliging him to government action, that is, to resistance. Among the various factors explaining Donoso’s decision to remain in Paris, his statement of government as a divine ligature stands out. Government was, nonetheless, only one of the natural ligatures found in the

²⁵⁴ Donoso Cortés, *Cartas al conde de Montalembert*, 327.

²⁵⁵ Sevilla Andrés, “El pensamiento internacional de Donoso Cortés,” 186.

²⁵⁶ Donoso Cortés, *Cartas al conde de Montalembert*, 325.

social organism, alongside God, family and property. Political action was far from comprehensive or totalizing.²⁵⁷

Throughout Donoso's work, government implied a spirit of service to the social whole.²⁵⁸ In his 1850 *Discurso sobre la situación de España*, the last in his great trilogy, Donoso stated that "public ministry is not a sinecure; it is a service, and a tragic service. To govern is not to be served; it is to serve, not to revel; it's to row, and to live, and to die hand on the oar. That is the price that ought to be for those who want to be ministers, and only those who are so at that price, are truthfully so."²⁵⁹ In his letter to Cardinal Fornari, he had posited that Catholicism had "taught the peoples that no man has right above another man, because all authority comes from God; that no one who is not small in his own eyes, will be great; that powers are instituted for good; that to rule is to serve, that Principality is a ministry, and consequently a sacrifice."²⁶⁰

We have already noted how in his letter to the director of the *Revue de Deux Mondes*, Donoso insisted that "a Power without limits can never be a ministry nor a service, and political Power, under the empire of Christian civilization, is no other thing."²⁶¹ Indeed, the theme of government as service is evocative of the Papal title *Servus Servorum Dei*, or servant of the servants of God.

The spirit of service is the corollary of humility. Only the humble can truly serve. "What are, according to Donoso Cortés, the *ideas madre* with which Christianity has civilized society?" asks Valverde. "The first is—as strange as it may seem—the idea of humility."²⁶²

²⁵⁷ Donoso's world of ligatures was a world of accepted limits, many of which lay beyond his will. In vindicating them, he took on characteristics of the Homeric hero Odysseus, as described by Patrick Deneen in *The Odyssey of Political Theory*. Donoso recognized the power growing around him, that like Calypso promised to deliver man from his limits, and renounced it, accepting Death, "the final limit." Deenen, *The Odyssey of Political Theory*, 232-237.

²⁵⁸ This disposition can be found in the Gospel of Matthew "But Jesus summoned them and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave.'" Matt. 20:25-27.

²⁵⁹ Donoso Cortés, *Discurso sobre la situación de España*, 495.

²⁶⁰ Donoso Cortés, *Carta al Cardenal Fornari*, 751.

²⁶¹ Donoso Cortés, *Carta al director de la 'Revue des Deux Mondes,'* 769-770.

²⁶² Valverde, introduction to *Obras completas de Juan Donoso Cortés*, 151.

Winning the Long Defeat

Far from dissolving himself into an empty, nihilistic era, Donoso found meaning in the strife of statecraft. This search presented a theological problem. Donoso had to reconcile a pervasive and benevolent Providence to the existence cataclysm of revolution. Thus, through his preferred lens, the theology of history, Donoso set out to build a theodicy of revolution. In his letter to Montalembert, Donoso explained that,

Revolutions are the lanterns of Providence and History; of those who have had the fortune or the disgrace of living and dying in restful and peaceful times, it can be said that they have gone through life, and reached death, without leaving infancy. Only those that, like us, live in the middle of the storm, can dress with the toga of virility and say of themselves that they are men. Revolutions are, from a certain point of view and up to a point, good like heresies, because they confirm and clarify the faith. I had never comprehended Lucifer's gigantic rebellion, until I saw with my own eyes the senseless pride of Proudhon; human blindness has almost ceased to be a mystery given the incurable and supernatural blindness of the affluent classes. With respect to the dogma of the inherent perversion of human nature and its inclination to evil, who shall doubt it after looking to the socialist phalanxes?²⁶³

On another occasion, Donoso writes to Isabella II, "when social transformations are deep, radical, universal, and simultaneous...they draw their source from further off and higher up...they have their source in God and their preparation in history, since those are precisely the marks which serve to distinguish the works of God from those of men."²⁶⁴ Both times, Donoso's language is reminiscent of John the Baptist's eschatological imagery collected in the Gospel of Matthew, by which the wheat is separated from the chaff.²⁶⁵ Thus, for Donoso, revolutions took on providential significance as a testing ground for the faithful in the Christian drama of Creation, history and humankind.

Amidst revolution, Donoso's definitive resolve was grounded in his self-awareness as an actor, at once minuscule and transcendental, in the master narrative of a personal God who alone could conquer the mundane. Affirming himself in this faith,

²⁶³ Donoso Cortés, *Cartas al conde de Montalembert*, 328.

²⁶⁴ Graham, *Donoso Cortés: Utopian Romanticist and Political Realist*, 144.

²⁶⁵ "But where danger is, / Deliverance also beckons" wrote the poet Hölderlin. Huddleston, *On "Translating" Hölderlin*.

Donoso held on to the lost position in Paris, until his end, in the twilight of empire, and at the dawn of Marx's revolutionary era.

Beforehand, Donoso poured his fundamental disposition into his polemic with the Spanish press following the *Discurso sobre la dictadura*, "All my doctrine is here: the *natural* triumph of evil over good and the *supernatural* triumph of God over evil."²⁶⁶ Donoso's genuine hope was eschatological. It is fitting to conclude by evoking another great Catholic imagination in modern history, J. R. R. Tolkien, who wrote: "Actually I am a Christian, and indeed a Roman Catholic, so that I do not expect 'history' to be anything but a 'long defeat'—though it contains... some samples or glimpses of final victory."²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ Donoso Cortés, *Polémica con la prensa española*, 337.

²⁶⁷ Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, 273.

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